NOT FOR SALE

THE CALL OF THE JAGADGURU

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Thoughts from the Eternal Law
Thoughts from the Vedānta
Dialogues with the Guru
Thoughts from the Gīṭā
The Saint of Śringeri
The Great Equation

THE
CALL OF THE JAGADGURU

Teachings of His Holiness Śrī Jagadguru
Śrī Chandrasekhara Bhārati Swāmigal
of Śṛṅgeri

BY

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Tirunelveli

WITH A FOREWORD BY
DR. C. P. RAMASWAMI AIYAR

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FOREWORD

Śrī R. Krishnaswāmi Aiyar who has been a devoted Siṣya of His Holiness Śrī Jagadguru Śrī Chandrasekhara Bhāratī Swāmigal of Śṛṅgeri has already published the gist of some discourses of the late Jagadguru and has now compiled a fuller selection of his teachings summarized under several heads. Some of these summaries have already appeared in the *Kalyāṇa-Kalpataru*.

The late Jagadguru was a truly evolved Being and an authentic Seer who lived and taught always in sight of his Master. In my experience, there have been two persons, Jagadguru Śrī Chandrasekhara Bhāratī Swāmigal and Venkataramaṇa Maharṣi of Tiruvaṇṇāmalai who, whilst in this world, most unmistakably dwelt with the Unseen.

Pandit Vidyābhuṣan Venkatarāma Śarmā has given to the world a short poem entitled *Ādiśaṁkarastava* outlining the main details of Ādi Śaṁkarācārya. Of course, there are several works devoted to the phenomenal pilgrimages of Ādi Śaṁkarācārya and to the foundation of the several Mutts that bear his name. It is a matter for perennial wonder how, in the course of a short life, he was able not only to travel to all the significant places in our country but to create for us an encyclopaedia of philosophic as well as devotional literature which, both in form and matter, can be ranked with the sublimest productions of the human genius. Not the least important of his contributions was the foundation of the Śṛṅgeri Mutt which later owed so much to his Siṣyas.

It is one of the glories of the Śṛṅgeri Mutt that, more than other great foundations like the Papacy and the Caliphate, all the personages who have successively occupied the position of its head have been men both of profound learning and unsullied and lofty character.

According to all systems of Hindu philosophy, Liberation or Mokṣa is experienced in this life before being perfected thereafter. This realization of Liberation is deemed to arise as a result of constant practice and can only be attained by contact with a Guru or Preceptor who has himself attained such realization. This aspect has been elucidated by Śrī Śaṁkara himself in his *Śataślokī* (first two lines on p. 113, verse 42):

जीवन्मुक्तिर्मुमुक्षोः प्रथममथ ततो मुक्तिरात्यन्तिकी च
तेऽभ्यासज्ञानयोगाद्गुरुचरणकृपापाङ्गसङ्गेन लब्धात् ।

On a memorable occasion in Vāranāsi, it is recorded, that Śrī Śaṁkara, whilst proceeding along the street, came into contact with Lord Śiva Himself who assumed the form of a Caṇḍāla. Śrī Śaṁkara asked him to move away and thereupon ensued a dialogue at the end of which Śrī Śaṁkarācārya embodied in deathless poetry his conviction that not birth nor condition but knowledge and illumination constitute the Guru. Śrī Śaṁkara has asserted that if the unity of the Supreme Individual is firmly perceived by anyone, then he, whether he is a Dvija or a Caṇḍāla, is fit to be a Guru:

सैवाहं न च दृश्यवस्त्विति दृढप्रज्ञाऽपि यस्यास्ति चेत्
चाण्डालोऽस्तु स तु द्विजोऽस्तु गुरुरित्येषा मनीषा मम ॥

The late Jagadguru was one who walked in the footsteps of his great predecessor. He made it clear in his teachings that it is not merely lip-homage that makes a true Siṣya but, as is stated in Chapter I of this book, "The Need for a Guru," the Master will never be pleased with a servant who neglects his duties but indulges in prostrations.

This volume contains a series of precepts devoted to the elucidation of the value of the Śāstras, of Dharma and true education, the search for happiness and the way to happiness. With apt quotations from the Smṛtīs and the *Gītā* and even from poets like Bhartṛhari, the Ācārya discusses the competence and duties of man and the need for strenuous effort in this life. The volume is, in short, a re-statement of the fundamental teachings of our faith but it hardly needs to be emphasized that the importance and value of a message lie at least as much in the character and quality of the teacher as in the teachings themselves which, after all, are universal and perennial. Those who had, like myself, the inestimable privilege of personal contact and acquaintance with Jagadguru Śrī Chandrasekhara Bhāratī Swāmigal, can alone appreciate how he was the very embodiment of the doctrines that he taught and practised and how fully he demonstrated the possibility of a person being observant yet detached from everything that appertains to the lesser activities of the world.

The late Jagadguru Śrī Chandrasekhara Bhāratī Swāmigal, during his life-time, was so often wrapped in contemplation and so frequently attained the state of Samādhi that the unthinking even thought that he was off his mind. The manner of his departure from this world, if properly regarded, was a voluntary surrender to the elements of the mortal body which had served its purpose of enlightening and serving as an example to his generation.

It is well that the words of such a true Mahātma should be preserved for posterity, and Śrī R. Krishnaswāmi Aiyar deserves the thanks of everyone for having performed this pious duty with reverence and affection.

C. P. RAMASWAMI AIYAR

Ootacamund
14 October 1957.

PREFACE

In my earlier publication *From the Master's Lips* since republished under the title of *Dialogues with the Guru*, I gave samples of the method of exposition adopted by His Holiness Śrī Jagadguru Śrī Chandrasekhara Bhārati Swāmigal of Śṛṅgeri in the course of his ordinary conversations. At the desire of some friends I have attempted here a reproduction of his longer talks with the help of some notes which were taken down at the time by some friends and myself. In presenting these thoughts in a language different from the one in which they were expressed, it is possible that I may have unconsciously erred in some respects; but those who have moved intimately with His Holiness or have studied the Śāstras will help me greatly if they would draw my attention to them with a view to their rectification in another edition.

The teachings recorded here were addressed to lay audiences and do not therefore deal with the higher flights of the Advaita philosophy, but are in the nature of a fervent appeal to all not to waste their precious lives but to utilize them, as best as they can, for their own ultimate good. It is devoutly hoped that such an appeal will not be entirely lost upon this world in spite of its present tendencies.

Most of the matter in this book appeared as a series of articles in the *Kalyāṇa-Kalpataru* of Gorakhpur, and I thank its publishers for their kind permission to reprint them here in a collected form.

My grateful thanks are also due to Messrs. Ganesh & Co. of Madras who have kindly included this publication in their self-imposed and selfless task of broadcasting the truths of our religion and have brought it out with their characteristic neatness.

I gratefully acknowledge also my indebtedness to the esteemed statesman-scholar Dr. C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar for his kind and appreciative Foreword.

R. KRISHNASWAMI AIYAR

CONTENTS

PAGE

FOREWORD v
PREFACE xi

CHAPTER

I. THE NEED FOR A GURU . . . 1
1. Our Goal—2. A Guide is Necessary—3. The Gift of Knowledge—4. Some Instances—5. Devotion Rewards Itself.

II. THE SACRED COMMANDS . . . 17
1. The Universe and Its Ruler—2. The Study of the Vedas—3. The Need for Right Action—4. Qualification for Knowledge.

III. DHARMA 33
1. Avoid Paining the Guru—2. Adharma, the Cause of Misery—3. Dharma, the Cause of Happiness—4. Give Dharma a Trial—5. Be Guided by Dharma.

IV. PROPER EDUCATION . . . 47
1. Learning and Wealth—2. Dharma Sustains the Universe—3. The Function of the Śāstras—4. True Happiness—5. True Knowledge.

CHAPTER PAGE

V. THE VALUE OF THE ŚĀSTRAS . . 61

1. No Effort is Ever Wasted—2. Virtue and Vice only for Man—3. Degrees of Faith—4. The Śāstras and Reason—5. The Authority of the Vedas.

VI. THE DUTY OF MAN . . . 75

1. Grades of Beings—2. Competence of Man—3. Wasted Opportunities—4. Importance of Human Birth.

VII. THE SEARCH FOR HAPPINESS . . 85

1. The Causes of Pain and Pleasure—2. The Bliss of the Self—3. Sensuous Pleasure is no Happiness—4. The Means of Happiness—5. Our Duty to Strive.

VIII. PURIFICATION OF THE MIND . . 99

1. Mistaken Perception—2. The Need for Karma—3. The Conquest of Desire—4. Steady the Mind.

IX. THE WAY TO HAPPINESS . . . 113

1. A Reflected Image—2. Please the Lord—3. Has the Lord Any Wants?—4. Surrender the Mind to the Lord—5. The Opportune Moment.

X. DEVOTION 124

1. The Three Stages—2. Three Kinds of Devotion in Action—3. Selfless Service for the Lord—4. The Best Worship.

CHAPTER PAGE

XI. TRUE KNOWLEDGE 137

1. Ignorance, the Cause of Bondage—2. The Tree of Phenomenal Life—3. Objective Pleasure is Really Misery—4. Eradicate Ignorance.

XII. THE NATURE OF THE SELF . . . 149

1. The Object of the Highest Love—2. The Body is Not the Self—3. The Faculties are Not the Self—4. The Vital Energy is Not the Self—5. The Mind is Not the Self.

XIII. THE BLISS OF THE SELF . . . 167

1. Mistaken Conceptions—2. The Slip—3. Duty Has its Own Reward.

XIV. NEED FOR STRENUOUS EFFORT . . 174

1. Strive Even Now—2. Strive Even Here—3. Do Not Waste This Birth—4. Our Urgent Duty.

ERRATA

Page	*Line*	*For*	*Read*
36	16	द्वितराशु	वितराशु
41	19	testing	tasting
67	31	done	done knowingly and that done
70	8	Agathi	Agastya
,,	9	Amla	Amalaka
80	14	get	got
93	17	त्वमेव	तमेव
94	12	त्वमेतं	तमेतं
101	15-16	“igno-rance’	(‘ignorance’)
,,	18	derivative	derivatives
138	17	चौरेणा . .	चोरेणा . .
142	29	stronger	strong
153	1	an other	another
,,	15	Śrībhala	Śrībala
185	3	Samādhi	Śamādi

THE CALL OF THE JAGADGURU

CHAPTER I

THE NEED FOR A GURU

1. *Our Goal*

It is a well-known truth that all living beings always long for happiness and abhor misery. They are at all times exerting themselves to get such happiness and to avoid such misery. Even though all their efforts are based on these two motives, it cannot be said that they always attain the happiness or avoid the misery. If the means adopted by them are really the means for attaining these objects, there can possibly be no failure. If, however, there is failure, we have necessarily to conclude either that the means conceived of as the means to obtain a particular objective are really not the means or that there is another element which the means require to make them lead to the desired effect. If the causal means are correctly observed, it cannot be that the effect does not follow. If the effect does not follow, that can only mean that what we thought to be the means are really nothing of the sort. If the means are the proper ones, the result must inevitably follow. If you say: "I dined but I am still hungry," it can only mean that you did not dine well enough to get rid of hunger. Similarly, if we do not get happiness, it means that we do not know the proper means and have not properly adopted them. If we do not get rid of misery, it only means that we do not know the cause of the misery and do not avoid or abandon it.

Is it proper that, when we are always making efforts to attain happiness or avoid misery, such efforts should prove ineffective? This is no doubt a proper question. If we can find out with the help of our own intelligence the means of happiness, all of us must be ever happy and never miserable. Even if we happen to know the means properly and adopt them strictly, as there is many an impediment likely to prevent our effort from coming to fruition, it is necessary to know about such possible impediments and get rid of them also. The main reason for not attaining our object though we are ever active is our not knowing accurately what kind of effort will lead to what kind of result. As stated in the Yoga-Vāsiṣta, individual effort is of two sorts, one in conformity with the Śāstras and the other in violation of the Śāstras. Effort in violation of the Śāstras leads to evil and effort in conformity with the Śāstras leads to good.

Good is again of two sorts, the Permanent and the Impermanent. All kinds of good from the lowest of pleasures to the Bliss of Hiraṇyagarbha come under the category of the impermanent. It is seen from the Purāṇas that even the Devas are frequently put to misery by the Asuras and that the four-faced Brahmā

Himself was at one time attacked by the Asuras, Madhu and Kaiṭabha. Thus their happiness also, mixed as it is with misery, is not absolute good and is but impermanent. If we probe into the question why it should be so, we will easily see that, as their happiness is the result of an action and is therefore born anew, it cannot possibly be permanent. Whatever is born must have an end. It may be that some kinds of happiness are able to last for longer times but they can never be permanent. It is only reasonable that they have to cease to be when the Apūrva, the unseen resultant of their causal karma, becomes exhausted. If they cease to be, further effort is necessary to secure further merit. This will lead to more enjoyment. Then again there will have to be more effort. And this alternation of effort and enjoyment must go on for ever without end. That is why the Śāstras point out that there is another kind of happiness, which is permanent.

2. *A Guide is Necessary*

To tell us that such a happiness does exist and to teach us the way to it and to get us the Grace of God to bring our efforts to fruition, it is very necessary to have a Guru.

आराधितं दैवतमिष्टमर्थं ददाति तस्याधिगमो गुरोः स्यात् ।
नो चेत्कथं वेदितुमीश्वरोऽसावतीन्द्रियं दैवतमिष्टदं नु ॥

"God, if properly worshipped, will give us the desired object. But the knowledge of that God is

> to be had from the Guru. If there is none such, how will one be able to know about Him, for God the giver of the desired object is beyond the reach of the senses?"

As laid down in this passage, if we want the Grace of God a preliminary requisite is the securing of the blessings of a Guru. To get such blessings we must earnestly seek out such a Guru and surrender ourselves to him.

For any kind of effort to fructify, it is necessary that the person who engages himself in that effort should be qualified to so engage himself. Similarly we must first consider a little whether we have in us the qualifications necessary to enable us to seek refuge in a Guru. We may even go to the length of claiming that we are in fact more qualified in this particular than our ancestors. They were from the moment of their birth engaging themselves always in the activities enjoined by the Śāstras and were always in surrender to their Gurus; there was no necessity for them to seek refuge in a Guru anew. On the other hand, we have been spending our time till now mostly in activities contrary to the injunctions of the Śāstras and we do not know what happiness is or what are the means to attain it. Surrender to a Guru is therefore more urgent and necessary in our case. We are certainly therefore more qualified in this matter.

It was said above that a Guru is required to tell us about the nature of Dharma, the cause of happiness, and of Adharma, the cause of misery, and to lead us to an understanding of the nature of God, the giver of both. It may be asked, why not God Himself come down to this world and teach us direct? Why need there be any Guru between Him and us? Even in the ordinary world, if a man wants to command the respect of others, he will not succeed at all if he goes out into their midst and asks them all to respect him. It is usual to ask somebody who knows him well to inform those others about his worth. Similarly, to engender in us any devotion to God, we must learn about Him from one who has known Him well. Further, suppose that God assumes a human or other form and stands before us and says to us: "I am God. You must all act according to my dictates." Will any of us be prepared to accept such a monitor as God or to obey His commands? In fact, did not the Lord at one time take form as Śrī Kṛṣṇa and try such a method of teaching? In spite of the unequivocal assertions made and the proofs given by Him, did not Duryodhana refuse to believe Him? Further, as God has no form of His own, He cannot appear before us in any form of His own. Once upon a time the sages thought that the atheists were denying the existence of God as He was not an object of perception and therefore with a view to dispel atheism they prayed to God to make Himself perceptible. In deference to their prayer He assumed a perceptible form and appeared before the atheists. They at once said: "We have been saying that there is no God. If you say that *this* is your God, we will certainly say *this* is not God, for the very fact of his being perceptible negatives his being God." To those therefore who deny God because of His imperceptibility,

नास्ति ईश्वरः प्रत्यक्षाविषयत्वात्

and would at the same time deny His Godhead because of His perceptibility,

नायं ईश्वरः प्रत्यक्षविषयत्वात्

what can God Himself do even if He comes down in person?

Another doubt may arise, as God has already declared in the Vedas what Dharma and Adharma are, will it not be sufficient if we ourselves look into those Śāstras? What need is there for a Guru for this purpose? First of all, it is impossible for us to study all the Śāstras and learn all that is laid down in them. Secondly, it is an impracticable task to take to the observance of Dharma after we have learnt what it is from a study of all the Śāstras, for any number of lives that may be given to us will not suffice for such a study. Further, as the defects inherent in us are numberless, it is impossible for us to find out all of them or to seek to get rid of them by ourselves. A Guru is therefore necessary to know about our spiritual equipments, to find out the stage in which we are at present, to decide what course of action will take us to the next higher stage and to teach and guide us aright. It may seem to a person suffering from the heat of fever that it may subside if he plunges into cold water. It may be true in one sense, but the heat will go down with life itself. It is not therefore possible to decide from mere appearances or from what seems to be reasonable. A doctor who knows the nature of fevers and knows what medicine has to be prescribed for which kind of fever and knows also how to administer it effectively has to be sought after. It will not be sufficient if we ourselves know which medicine has to be used in a particular kind of fever. When the fever is high and we are naturally anxious to have a speedy cure, it may seem to us that a quantity intended for four doses to be taken at intervals will effect an early cure if taken in a single dose itself. If it is so done, the medicine itself may act as poison. Similarly when the Śāstras prescribe what courses of action have to be pursued by aspirants in the several stages, a Guru is necessary to know what the Śāstras prescribe and to teach us the particular course of action suited to our qualifications.

3. The Gift of Knowledge

It is said that of all kinds of gift, the gift of food is the best, for in only that kind of gift the receiver of the gift can get fully satisfied. If any amount of money is given or any number of cloths or any extent of land, the recipient may not be satisfied and may not say: "I have received enough." But in the case of feeding, the recipient can eat only what he can and will of his own accord say: "Enough. I want no more." He will decline to take even a single morsel more. Thus the gift of food is the only gift in which the giver can satisfy the recipient till the latter says: "Enough." It is for this reason that such a gift is considered very meritorious. But even in that gift it must be borne in mind that, though a person given a hearty meal says then that he has had enough, the satisfaction that he has is only temporary, for the desire for food will come up again when he becomes hungry at the time for the next meal. If therefore we can conceive of a kind of gift in which the recipient will not only get temporary satisfaction but will no longer be in want, that is, will continue in a state of permanent satisfaction, need any one doubt the statement that no kind of gift can possibly be higher than that? Further, if a man desires to have a particular thing and if that particular thing is given to him, he will no doubt get satisfaction but that satisfaction is necessarily confined to that particular thing. It cannot at all be said that no desire for any other thing will arise in him. If therefore there is such a kind of gift in which the recipient will not only have satisfaction but will also be freed at the same time from any desire whatsoever, can there be anything equal to such a kind of gift which gives such supreme satisfaction?

The knowers say that such a gift which gives satisfaction to the recipient for ever afterwards and in all things is the gift of knowledge. Our great Master exclaims that nothing in the three worlds can claim even to be a simile to the true Guru who is the giver of this gift of knowledge, the highest of all gifts.

दृष्टान्तो नैव दृष्टस्त्रिभुवनजठरे सद्गुरोर्ज्ञानदातुः
स्पर्शश्चेत्तत्र कल्प्यः स नयति यदहो स्वर्णतामश्मसारम् ।
न स्पर्शत्वं तथाऽपि श्रितचरणयुगे सद्गुरुः स्वीयशिष्ये
स्वीयं साम्यं विधत्ते भवति निरुपमस्तेन वा लौकिकोऽपि ॥

When there is nothing in the world which has any resemblance to him, how can there be a simile? The touch-stone which converts into gold all pieces of iron coming in contact with itself may claim to be a simile. But even that can only make the iron piece a golden one and cannot make it also a touch-stone. That is, even if it converts an iron article into gold it will not invest that converted article with the power of converting into gold whatever comes in contact with the latter. The Guru, however, makes the disciple who has surrendered himself to him his equal in all respects so that the disciple in his turn gets the capacity to impart to his own disciples the very state of illumination which he got from his Guru. It is worthy of note that the Guru imparts to his disciple " his own similitude," that is, similarity to himself.

Instead of understanding the words स्वीयं साम्यं as meaning " his (Guru's) own similitude (similarity)," a different interpretation is possible. In the *Bhagavad-Gītā-Bhāṣya*, the great Master in interpreting the context

पण्डिताः समदर्शिनः

has pointed out that सम is synonymous with Brahman. We can therefore take the word साम्य to mean the state of being Brahman. In this way of interpretation, the above passage means that the Guru imparts to the disciple " his (disciple's) own state of being Brahman ". In the former interpretation inasmuch as the disciple becomes only " like " the Guru, there is still a remnant of differentiation. As even that is absent in the second interpretation, that seems to be a preferable one. Further, instead of saying that a new status, be it equal to his own, is created by the Guru in the disciple, it is more appropriate to say that the inherent Brahmanhood which was always in the disciple becomes apparent at the touch of the Guru, for then only can it be permanent.

How can a simile be found for a Guru who is prepared to give or make manifest the inherent Brahmanhood of the disciple? That is why the Master calls the Guru as " without a simile ". Even in the branches of ordinary worldly knowledge, a teacher imparts to the pupil what he knows on that subject and makes him his own equal and is therefore without a simile. While so, what doubt is there that the Guru who imparts the highest knowledge to and confers the highest good on the disciple has no simile at all? The Guru, the ocean of mercy that he is, is ever ready to lift us up and bless us with the highest good; it is our bounden duty to seek him, fall at his sacred feet and surrender ourselves to him unconditionally. With him as our support and refuge, is there any reason to doubt that we will get all our desires including the desire for the highest good fulfilled without fail?

4. *Some Instances*

It was said above that surrender to a Guru was necessary. If you ask another to do some act, it is usual for him to expect you to tell him the authority on which you base your advice or command. It is therefore only in the fitness of things if I state my authorities on the question of surrender to a Guru. If we know instances of persons who have before our times surrendered themselves to their Gurus and have profited thereby, we will also be moved to secure the blessings of a Guru, for there is nothing which is impossible of attainment to the one who has such blessings. It is said that if the Guru is pleased, all miraculous powers come in of their own accord.

यदि तुष्टो गुरुरेकः स्वयमेवायान्ति सिद्धयः सर्वाः ॥

The reason is quite clear, for in describing the nature of the Guru the Śāstras tell us that he is even Brahmā, even Viṣṇu and even Maheśvara.

गुरुर्ब्रह्मा गुरुर्विष्णुर्गुरुर्देवो महेश्वरः ॥

All the fruits of worshipping individually these three great entities and all the Devas below them are assured to the one who serves his Guru. That is why the Guru is conceived of as comprising within himself all the deities.

Among those who attained greatness by pleasing their Gurus, Śrī Padmapādācārya stands in the front rank. His original name was Sanandana. The other disciples of the great Master Śrī Śaṁkarācārya thought that their Master had a special affection towards Sanandana and began to entertain a sort of jealousy towards him. As jealousy was a defect and had to be eradicated, the Master decided upon demonstrating to them the unique and intense devotion of Sanandana. When the Master was standing on the bank of the river Ganga, he signalled to the disciples who were then on the other bank to come to him immediately. The other disciples hurried about in search of a boat. Sanandana, however, thought that, as the very sandals of his Guru were potent enough to take him safely across the limitless ocean of phenomenal life, the crossing of this river could not be a difficult matter and with intense faith in the sacred feet of the Guru entered the water. The Goddess Ganga astonished and pleased at his devotion brought out a full-blown lotus at every step which he placed on the flood. The other disciples were exceedingly astonished at this incident, gave up their feeling of jealousy and ever afterwards entertained great respect for him. As lotuses appeared at every place where he put his feet, he got since then the appropriate name of Padmapāda (Lotus-foot). In reciting this incident Śrī Śaṁkara Digvijaya has this passage:

संतारिकाऽनवधिसंसृतिसागरस्य
किं तारयेन्न सरितं गुरुपादभक्तिः ॥

Here the ocean of phenomenal life is characterised as "limitless". It may seem at first sight that it is really limitless and can never be crossed over. Words like "limitless" and "shoreless" only describe the state relative to our present condition. It is certainly true that if we continue in our present condition we can never reach the other shore. That is why it is said that the ocean is shoreless. Really speaking there is a limit to this ocean. That limit is knowledge. Once knowledge is had, we are on the other shore. That is the limit. Till then, the ocean of phenomenal life is certainly shoreless and limitless.

We shall now consider the story of Totakācarya. He took the great Master as his sole refuge and derived great pleasure from serving him and used to wash his clothes and do other services. He had not much of learning in the Śāstras; still the Master used to begin his exposition of the Vedānta literature only after Totakācaryā came in. One day there was some delay in his coming. Padmapādācarya and others thought that the Master need not wait for the coming of one who had not the requisite power of understanding what was taught. They said: "If your Holiness thinks that his presence is necessary for the exposition, we have a good substitute in the wall here and there need be no further delay." On hearing this arrogant remark, the Master with a view to clear them of the pride born of learning and with over-flowing grace on the absent disciple mentally blessed the latter with a flash which illuminated for him all the fourteen kinds of learning in all their entirety. The disciple who was just washing the clothes of the Master on the bank of the river immediately became proficient in all the Śāstras. Then proceeding from the river bank to the presence of the Master he described the glory of the Ātmā in wonderful stanzas now collected together in a book known as *Śrutisāra-Samuddharaṇam*. The other disciples were astonished at this and began to respect him greatly thereafterwards. This disciple was formerly known by the name of Giri but after this incident he was known as Totakācārya, as his stanzas happened to be composed in the Totaka metre.

5. *Devotion Rewards Itself*

It is mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* that there was one Ekalavya who was similarly famous for his devotion to the Guru. When he approached the great Droṇācārya for initiation into Dhanur-Vidyā, the science of archery, the latter declined to initiate him. He did not, however, desire to seek any other Guru. So he had a mud image of Droṇācārya made for him and every day he would prostrate before it and pray to it and then practise the art of archery in its presence and in course of time he became a very efficient archer. One day Droṇācārya and Arjuna were passing through a forest and noticed with great astonishment five arrows discharged successively by somebody strike a dog simultaneously and, desiring to know that wonderful archer, they turned and saw Ekalavya standing near-by. When asked who he was, he said that he was a disciple of Droṇācārya. Droṇa had promised before to Arjuna that he would teach Dhanur-Vidyā to him alone in such a manner that he would have none superior to him in the world. Remembering that promise, Arjuna began to suspect his Guru of making another a greater archer than himself and he was led to do so by the great facility of hand displayed by Ekalavya. Droṇa had forgotten the boy to whom he had declined to teach Dhanur-Vidyā and so asked Ekalavya: "How are you a disciple of Droṇācārya and when did he teach you?" Then Ekalavya mentioned what he had done. Droṇa was astonished at the story and, recollecting the promise which he had made to Arjuna, said: "I am that Droṇa. If you are really my disciple, do you not owe me a Gurudakṣiṇa?" Ekalavya unhesitatingly said: "I am certainly ready to give it. What shall I give?" Droṇa said, "Give your thumb to me." At once without the slightest hesitation, Ekalavya cut off his thumb and placed it as an offering at the feet of his Guru. By reason of the deprivation of this material limb, Ekalavya who was a greater archer than Arjuna became just his equal. In this story, who is it that really imparted to Ekalavya the knowledge of archery? Droṇa did not even know that he had such a disciple and, as soon as he learnt about it, instead of blessing him he really punished him. It is not therefore possible to say that the proficiency was due to any grace of his. Nor is it possible to say that the mud image was responsible for the result. The only possible conclusion therefore is that it was really the result of the disciple's devotion to the Guru and that God, pleased with his devotion, rewarded him for it.

These and other stories well illustrate the value of surrender to the Guru with deep devotion. It may be that we are not able to carry out that surrender to the extent adopted by these devotees but it is certainly our duty to do it to the extent of our capacities. We must decide for ourselves to what extent our surrender is possible. It will not do to be merely repeating the sentences: "God is greater than us. He is our Ruler. The Guru is greater than us. He is our refuge." If a servant goes near his employer every day and tells him: "You are great. You are my Master," and comes away after prostrating before him, he is certainly not entitled to be called a good servant. He who carries out punctiliously the commands of his employer is really the good servant though he may not praise or prostrate before the latter. The Master will never be pleased with the servant who neglects his duties but indulges himself in prostrations. Such a servant will earn only his displeasure. If therefore we want really to say of ourselves that we have devotion to the Guru, it will not be sufficient if we prostrate before his presence and do other acts of worship. Only if we act according to his commands will we earn his blessings and secure everlasting good.

CHAPTER II

THE SACRED COMMANDS

1. The Universe and Its Ruler

IT has been stated that devotion to the Guru means essentially the carrying out of his commands. What then are the commands which have been laid down by our Guru? The great Master Śrī Śaṁkarācārya has himself condensed them in a small work called *Upadeśa-Pañcakam.* We shall just consider the first stanza therein. Eight commands are contained in it. They are:

१. वेदो नित्यमधीयताम् ।

1. Study the Vedas daily.

२. तदुदितं कर्म स्वनुष्ठीयताम् ।

2. Observe properly the activities enjoined therein.

३. तेनेशस्य विधीयतामपचितिः ।

3. Perform the worship of God by means of the same.

४. काम्ये मतिस्त्यज्यताम् ।

4. Abandon the desire in desireful actions.

५. पापौघः परिधूयताम् ।

5. Shake off the store of sins.

६. भवसुखे दोषोऽनुसंधीयताम् ।

6. Ponder over the defects in phenomenal pleasures.

७. आत्मेच्छा व्यवसीयताम् ।

7. Steady the longing for the Self.

८. निजगृहात्तूर्णं विनिर्गम्यताम् ।

8. Walk out of your home soon.

As the Master has mentioned in his introduction to his commentary on *Bhagavad-Gītā*, the Lord when He created the world promulgated the path of Nivṛtti-Dharma through the great sages Sanaka, Sanandana and others and the path of Pravṛtti-Dharma through the sages Marīci and others. It is Dharma that is responsible for the proper sustenance of the universe:

धर्मो विश्वस्य जगतः प्रतिष्ठा ।

The maintenance of the world is therefore dependent upon Dharma. Śravaṇa (hearing the sacred truth), Manana (cogitation over its significance) and other courses make up Nivṛtti-Dharma or training in Renunciation. All activities primarily based on oblations in fire are Pravṛtti-Dharma or training in Action. This is only a rough definition. If Dharma is thus the means of sustaining the universe, by whom can it be promulgated except by the Lord, the Creator of the universe?

Can we not assume that this universe has been always like this? Why should we assume that it was created by an Entity called God and that He made arrangements for its sustenance? Further, in whatever way the universe came into existence, why not we assume that the beings inhabiting it evolved the system of Dharma by themselves? These and similar questions are asked by many a person. Appayya-Dīkṣita has very cogently answered them in his work *Ātmārpaṇa-Stuti*:

क्षित्यादीनामवयववतां निश्चितं जन्म तावत्
नास्त्येवात्र क्वचन कलितं कर्त्रधिष्ठानहीनम् ।
नाधिष्ठातुं प्रभवति जडो नाप्यनीशश्च भाव-
स्तस्मादाद्यस्त्वमसि जगतां नाथ जाने विधाता ॥

It is a fact that must be accepted on all hands that all things which have parts must have come into existence at some time or other. To say that a thing came into existence but that there was none to make it come into being is quite illogical. For, a thing is said to come into existence only when we conceive of that thing as non-existing before that moment. There must be some reason which brings about the coming of it into existence. It cannot be postulated that the thing itself subjected itself to the operation of the causal reason and thus came into existence. Unless it had some sort of existence before, it is impossible to admit the possibility of its subjecting itself to any such process. It stands to reason therefore that, when an effect is produced for the first time from a necessarily antecedent cause, there must be an agency capable of acting upon that cause and producing an effect therefrom. The universe therefore being non-existent before its coming into being and, being further inert or incapable of action of its own accord, cannot possibly create itself. It may be said that the perceptible world made of the gross elements are traceable to the subtle elements. But an Entity has to be assumed as a Creator at least of those subtle elements which transcend our senses. There are innumerable reasons which may be advanced for proving the existence of a Creator. For the present, the inference from the fact of the universe having parts is sufficient.

As the individual souls are dependent and have but a little knowledge, it is impossible for them to find out for themselves the rules of Dharma. Further, if anybody is able of his own accord to find out what Dharma the means of happiness is and what Adharma the means of misery is, there is no reason at all why anybody should be miserable. On the other hand, everybody would be happy always. It will be clear from this itself that the system of Dharma and Adharma cannot be a creation of the individual souls. It necessarily follows that it is a creation of an Entity transcending them all. If everyone of the members of a family carry out the duties allotted to them unfailingly and conduct themselves in conformity with the directions of the head of the family, such a family is certainly a very creditable one. If, on the other hand, everyone of them begins to behave according to his own whims and fancies, there can be no doubt that the family will be ruined in no time. God, the Head of the family known as the universe, has prescribed the several duties of the members thereof. A State in which all the citizens are permitted to do all kinds of work indiscriminately has no right to be called a State. Only if the officers thereof perform correctly and without confusion the several duties attached to their respective offices will the Government run smoothly. Similarly, for administering this great kingdom known as the universe and for its smooth running, God has enunciated the system of Dharma.

2. *The Study of the Vedas*

Just as the father, the head of a family, calls together his sons and advises them, " In view of the welfare of the family and of the welfare of you all individually, you must conduct yourself in this and this manner and you must not behave in that and that manner," so does God, the Father of the universe, tell His progeny, the individual souls, " You must practise what I am telling you is Dharma and you must eschew what I am telling you is Adharma." It is therefore our duty to learn from the Vedic passages the positive injunctions like " Worship the Sandhyā everyday " and ascertain what other duties are enjoined upon us with due regard to our Varṇa and Āśrama. Similarly, we must learn from the Vedic passages like " Chew not tobacco," the negative injunctions prohibiting us from doing certain acts. The former come under the category of Dharma and have to be observed. The latter come under the category of Adharma and have to be avoided. We must somehow learn the nature of both Dharma and Adharma. It is not possible to know it by the mere help of direct perception or of reasoning. As a matter of fact, no Śāstra at all is necessary to tell us what we can ourselves learn with the aid of perception or reasoning. Dharma and Adharma do not come within the scope of any means of knowledge other than the Śāstra; the mere fact that the Śāstra enunciates Dharma and Adharma is proof that they cannot be ascertained by any other means of knowledge. In fact, the essential characteristic of a Śāstra is to instruct us on what cannot be learnt by any other means. In defining the Veda, it is said:

प्रत्यक्षेणानुमित्या वा यस्तूपायो न बुध्यते ।
एनं विदन्ति वेदेन तस्माद्वेदस्य वेदता ॥

> "Veda is called Veda (knowledge) because by means of the Veda people learn the means which cannot be learnt either by direct perception or by reasoning."

The primary significance of the word Śāstra is Veda itself. We no doubt use the word Śāstra with reference to the Smṛtis, Purāṇas and other literature, but that is only because they trace their authoritativeness from the Veda. The Veda prescribes Karma, Action, as the means of attaining Relative Good and Jñāna, Knowledge, as the means of attaining Absolute Good. All kinds of pleasures that can be had in the world, inclusive of the region of Brahmā, are included in the category of Relative Good. The Absolute Good is freedom from bondage. It is possible only for the Veda to tell us about either of these two. Even in an ordinary worldly occupation, there are some things which have to be done and there are other things which have to be avoided. Similarly, Dharma is what the individual souls have to perform and Adharma is what they have to avoid. To know what Dharma is and what Adharma is, we have necessarily to study the Vedas which enunciate their nature. That is why the great Master has given the first place to the study of the Vedas in his series of commands.

It is no doubt true that one acquires merit by learning the Vedas without understanding their meaning, but the word " Study " in this context must be taken to include the stage of understanding their contents also. When then there is the perceptible benefit of understanding the contents of the Vedas, it is not proper to ignore it and confine ourselves to the unseen merit obtainable by a mere study without reference to the meaning conveyed by the Vedas. It is said that, if a person born as a Brāhmaṇa neglects the study of the Vedas, he becomes a Vrātya, " outcaste ". It is argued from this that the study of the Vedas is only a preventive of such a contingency and that that contingency is averted by a mere study of the Vedas without going into the meaning thereof and that really no positive merit accrues as a result of the study of the Vedas. This is fallacious reasoning. When once the Vedas enjoin that they must be studied, it is not reasonable to say that no merit will accrue from such study. The mere fact that it is enjoined shows that merit does follow from it. To make this clear, the great Master points out that such study is a daily duty enjoined on us. If it is a daily duty, it goes without saying that it has its own merit as in the case of other daily duties enjoined by the Vedas.

The study of the Vedas may be necessary to give us a conception of Karma. But is it necessary to give us a knowledge of *Brahman*? As *Brahman* has to be learnt only through the Upaniṣads and as it is not possible to learn of it from any other source of knowledge, the study of the Vedas is necessary even for a seeker of *Brahman*. When the Śāstras specifically say that knowledge can be had only from the words of the Vedas, the contention that the knowledge of *Brahman* can be had merely from works in lay languages is evidently opposed to the teachings of the Vedas.

3. The Need for Right Action

Thus having emphasized the need to study the Vedas, the Master gives out his second command: "Perform well the actions prescribed therein." Nowadays some people, without knowing the true significance of the teachings of the Vedānta and influenced by their innate laziness, think that the giving up of all enjoined duties is the purport of the Vedānta. It is mainly to prevent the possibility of such a mistaken idea that the Master insists in this command upon performing the duties *well*. The Lord Maheśvara might have incarnated as Śrī Śaṁkarācārya even at the start and preached the path of Knowledge. But He did not. On the other hand, He asked Śrī Subrahmaṇya to go down into the world as Kumarila-Bhatta and had the path of Karma firmly established through him and then only He Himself came down in our midst. We can easily see even from this that Karma is very necessary. Karma is an external aid to Jñāna. If our mind becomes pure as the result of the proper performance of Karma, we then become competent to enter the path of knowledge. However much one may study the Vedānta, all that will be quite useless if the enjoined duties are not performed and the resultant purity of mind is not secured. If you want to harvest grain in a field, you must first pull off the weeds, you must then manure the field properly, and you must then sow the seed. If without caring to pull out the weeds, you go on doing the other things, however well you may do them, no benefit will be obtained. Similarly, for the purpose of eradicating our defects from us, we must perform the enjoined duties and thus make the mind pure. Only if the dirt is washed away by the performance of the enjoined duties, will it be possible for knowledge to dawn upon our mind.

कषाये कर्मभिः पक्के ततो ज्ञानं प्रवर्तते ।

The method of performing Karma is laid down in the third command wherein the Master points out that the worship of God consists in doing the actions enjoined by Him in the Vedas. Worship of God is not distinct from the performance of one's duties. In the *Bhagavad-Gītā* also, the Lord points out that the method of worshipping God is through performing one's own duties:

स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवः ।

By the words "one's duties" are meant the duties enjoined by the Śāstras for a particular individual. They do not mean any actions which he may choose to consider as duties without reference to the Śāstras, much less any activities in which he may choose to engage himself of his own accord.

If we stop to consider the nature of the Karmas which are capable of being viewed as worship of God, it will be seen that this is possible only in the case of the Karmas known as Nitya and Naimittika. That is why the Master says in his fourth command that the thought of Kāmya-Karma, Desireful Action, must be given up. Kāmya-Karma is very difficult to perform and the resultant gain is impermanent. It is therefore improper to resort to it. It is just like the saying:

काकमांसं शुनोच्छिष्टं स्तोकं तदपि दुर्लभम् ।

"Crow's flesh—the remnant of what a dog has eaten out of it—very small in quantity—and even that difficult to obtain."

Further, it is a necessary condition of all Kāmya-Karmas that they must be performed with great punctiliousness as detailed in the Śāstras. There must be no defect in any particular. Not only that. If there is the slightest defect, there will be injury also to the doer. Again, in these days, no Kāmya-Karma is properly performed and consequently no result follows. But instead of recognizing the fact that we have not properly performed them, we rush to deduce the conclusion that what is stated in the Śāstras is incorrect. In these days, therefore, the performance of Kāmya-Karma leads only to want of faith in the Śāstras. Even in this view, it is proper to confine ourselves to the obligatory Nitya and Naimittika-Karmas.

There is not much difference between Nitya-Karma and Naimittika-Karma. As the Nitya Karmas are prescribed in connection with occasions like sunrise and the new moon, they are also in a sense occasional or Naimittika-Karmas. When, however, they are distinguished from each other, it must be stated that Nitya-Karmas depend upon fixed occasions and that the Naimittika-Karmas depend upon occasions not fixed. Though the eclipse and other occasions with reference to which some Naimittika-Karmas are prescribed can also be definitely fixed according to the science of astronomy, they are not bound to occur every year regularly and are therefore called "not fixed".

If we perform these Nitya and Naimittika-Karmas with the thought that they operate as the worship of God, our sins begin to leave us. The Master mentions this in his next command: "Shake off all your sins." God can be expected to be pleased with us only if we become free from sins. That is why in the beginning of our daily Karmas we are asked to say:

ममोपात्तसमस्तदुरितक्षयद्वारा श्रीपरमेश्वरप्रीत्यर्थम् ।

"For securing the grace of the Great Lord through the elimination of all the sins accumulated by me."

Even if we want to have the good graces of our worldly employer or superior officer, we must first of all secure his pardon for all our faults hitherto and only after getting such a pardon can we aspire to get his good graces. As long therefore as our sins are there, we cannot expect God to be pleased with us.

4. *Qualification for Knowledge*

If by the proper performance of Karmas we are able to secure the grace of God and make our minds pure by the eradication of sins, our minds will be clear and competent enough to grasp things as they are. It is only then that we will see clearly the defects of phenomenal life. If the mind is not pure, even the pains of phenomenal life will seem pleasurable. The Master therefore issues his next command: "Ponder over the defects of phenomenal life," only after the sins are gone and the mind is purified. It will thus be seen that we cannot really claim to have purity of mind till a sense of detachment to phenomenal life is had. If detachment is an effect of the antecedent purity of mind and is also a perceptible effect, the question as to how long effort has to be made to secure the purity of mind does not arise at all. It will be just like asking:

how many times must I work the pestle up and down on the paddy grains to get rid of the husk and free the rice from it? The pestling must go on till the husk is separated. No other answer is possible. Similarly, effort towards purity of mind should be persisted in till desire for all objects including the pleasures of the highest Brahmaloka is eradicated.

If the mind is very pure, knowledge of the Self will arise the moment it is taught. No repetition of the teaching is necessary:

परिपक्वमतेः सकृच्छ्रुतं जनयेदात्मधियं श्रुतेर्वचः ।

Śrī Sureśvarācārya had secured for his mind freedom from all defects by reason of his scrupulous performance of Karma. The teachings of Śrī Śaṁkarācārya therefore impressed themselves upon his clear intellect and were accepted by him as propounding the truths laid down in the Vedas. By this single contact, Śrī Sureśvarācārya attained a state of supreme non-attachment and entered on the path of Knowledge. It is said that King Janaka also who was deeply devoted to the path of Karma heard once the teachings of a perfected soul and immediately attained knowledge.

It may be asked, why should non-attachment result from purity of mind? When the mind gets the capacity to perceive the nature of things as they are, the conception, "This is good," superimposed on those things will disappear naturally. When the mind begins to see also the faulty side of things, the conception, "I want it," will also disappear automatically. The Great Master says:

रत्ने यदि शिलाबुद्धिर्जायते वा भयं ततः ।
समीचीनत्वधीर्नैति नोपादेयत्वधीरपि ॥

"If a precious stone is considered to be a mere pebble or if there is any cause for fear from it, the idea that it is good will not arise, nor the idea that it is worth having."

Even if a thing tastes sweet to our tongue, we do not eat it if we know that it will lead to headache or stomach-ache. The question, "How can there be anything which seems good, but is really harmful," if carefully considered, does not arise, for all objects in the universe are like that. In a play called *Jānakī-Pariṇaya*, Mārīca as soon as he sees Śrī Rāma exclaims:

रघुनन्दन एष सुन्दरः करपद्मार्पितबाणकार्मुकः ।
अहिडिम्भ इवोद्वमन् विषं स्पृहणीयश्च भयंकरश्च मे ॥

"This Rāma is certainly beautiful holding as he does in his lotus-like hands the bow and arrow but is just like a young serpent emitting poison—attractive and at the same time terrifying to me."

So do all objects in the world appear pleasant but contain the seeds of fear. That must be our attitude. If either by a sense of possible fear or by a knowledge of the true nature of things, we learn to ponder over their faulty aspect, our minds will naturally turn towards the Self the realization of which will give permanent unequalled and faultless happiness. The next command of the Master, "Steady the longing for the Self," will fit in only at this stage. It may be asked: What is the need for any effort for attaining the Self, for the Self is but our inherent nature and is therefore always with us, and has not to be attained anew? It is usual to answer this question by referring to the example of the chain on the neck. That is, suppose a person is searching in all places for a chain which he is actually wearing on his own neck and while doing so is informed by a friend that the chain is still on the neck, does he not feel as much happy as if he got a new chain? Similarly, though the Self is ever with us, we are for the present under the impression that it is not so by reason of ignorance; and effort is therefore needed to get rid of that ignorance.

As the Master felt keenly that it was impossible to attain knowledge of the Self so long as one is in the midst of the pains and pleasures of phenomenal life brought on by ignorance, he closed this stanza with the command: "Go out of your house immediately."

It has been mentioned before that true devotion to a Guru who has out of his illimitable grace given us such teachings does not consist in anything more than carrying them out in actual practice. It is impossible for us to render such Gurus anything in return for this gracious help of theirs. We are never going to benefit them by any act of devotion on our part. Their preachings are intended only for our good. They do not get any benefit themselves. It is therefore for us to conform to their gracious teachings, observe scrupulously the duties allotted to each one of us, thereby secure the good graces of the Guru, rise to further heights by reason of his grace and ultimately attain freedom from all bondage and reach the Bliss Supreme.

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FRUITS OF MORAL LAW[1]

मधु वाता ऋतायते
मधु क्षरन्ति सिन्धवः
माध्वीर्नः सन्त्वोषधीः ॥
मधु नक्तमुतोषसो
मधुमत्पार्थिवं रजः
मधुद्यौरस्तु नः पिता ॥
मधुमान्नो वनस्पतिः
मधुमानस्तु सूर्यः
माध्वीर्गावो भवन्तु नः ॥

Sweet do the winds become unto him who desires to abide by the Moral Law; sweet do the streams flow for him; even so, may the herbs be sweet unto us; may night be sweet and dawn also sweet unto us; may the region of Earth be sweet and also Heaven, our father; may the sylvan god be sweet unto us; may the sun be sweet; and sweet may our kine become.

—*Rigveda I. 90. 6-8*

[1] (*Courtesy: Bhavan's Journal, Bombay*)

CHAPTER III

DHARMA

1. Avoid Paining the Guru

WE ought not to forget the most ordinary help which another may render to us. Ungratefulness is a very great sin. The Śāstras declare that there is no expiation for the sin of ingratitude. While so, what shall we say of one who forgets the Guru who teaches him all Dharma and imparts to him the knowledge leading to Mokṣa? It can be decidedly asserted that there is no sin equal to it. It is to obviate such a sin attaching itself to the people of this land that His Holiness the late Jagadguru of Sṛṅgeri revived the village of Kāladi, the birthplace of the great Master Śrī Śaṁkarācārya, and consecrated therein an image of His. When the Lord Himself with abundant grace came down in our midst in the shape of the Master and gave us in person the knowledge of Dharma, can we ever afford to forget Him? If there were no Guru, we could never understand aright the purport of the Vedas. The Śāstras say at one place, "Injure not any living being"; at another place "Kill not a Brāhmaṇa"; and at still another place, "Kill not a descendant of Maharṣi Atri." It is only a proper Guru that can point out correctly the significance of injunctions and prohibitions contained in passages like these. What is the import of these three sentences? They mean that as a general rule no living being ought to be injured and such injury ought to be avoided, that the killing of a Brāhmaṇa is a more grievous sin and must be rigorously desisted from and that injuring a person born in the *gotra* of Atri is a still more serious sin and must be more carefully avoided.

If ingratitude to the Guru is itself reprehensible, what shall we say of one who causes positive grief to him? How much greater is the magnitude of that sin? Many may have had the good fortune of coming into contact with His Holiness the late Jagadguru and of preserving the memory of it as an invaluable treasure. They will remember that his face was ever beaming with joy. Even now we can enjoy this characteristic of his by looking at any photograph of his. He never experienced any pain. If his face at any time showed any indication of pain, it was only pain caused by the condition of the people of the world. When addressing the World Mother, he has said, "O Mother, will you not make me happy? I am immersed in the ocean of grief." He himself explains the nature of the grief thus:

नास्तिक्यबुद्धिहतमानसवारिजातान्
त्यक्तात्मकर्मनिचयान् बहुशो द्विजाद्यान् ।
कृत्तोत्तमाङ्गजततीन् विनिरीक्ष्य दुःख-
वार्धौ निमग्नमिमम्ब सुखे नियुङ्क्ष्व ॥

"I see the people from the Brāhmaṇa downwards having their minds contaminated with atheistic thoughts. I see them mostly neglecting the duties enjoined upon them and I see them even disfiguring themselves by having their tufts of hair on their heads cut. And seeing these sorry spectacles, I am immersed in the ocean of sorrow. Make me happy."

Whether due to the education given in a foreign language or to any other reason, it is a fact that people are neglecting their own proper Dharma and courses of conduct, are changing their dress and mode of behaviour and are altering even their external appearances. Who will not be grieved to see such things? What is there surprising in our Guru, the fountain of mercy as he is, feeling grieved when he looks upon such transformations? Is it not a very grievous sin against the Guru if by anything in our conduct we give him cause for pain? Those who are neglecting their own Dharma and those who fail to perform aright their allotted duties all partake of this grievous sin against the Guru. Is it not our plain duty to free him from such sorrows and gladden his heart? The Guru does not expect any benefit from us. He is pleased if only we perform regularly and correctly our daily Saṁdhyā worship and other duties. This is all that is required to make the Gurus pleased with us. They have attained what all has to be attained. They require nothing more for their personal benefit. When, however, their attention is drawn to the present condition of the world they cannot but feel pity at the deterioration that has set in among the people and they cannot help praying to God to set the people aright and make them happy. The late Jagadguru has repeatedly prayed to God to vouchsafe to the people of the land the recollection of the sacred truths that there is God, that there is a birth again of various sorts to one now born, that there is a happy world beyond for those who do their allotted duties, that there are sins and that there are painful worlds, the resultant of such sins. He has prayed to the World-Mother to bless the people with an early perception of these truths.

ईशोऽस्ति जन्म सुविचित्रतरं हि जन्तो-
र्लोकान्तरं च निजकर्मकृतां सुखापम् ।
पापानि पापफलदाश्च तथैव लोका
इत्यम्ब लोकततये द्वितराशु बुद्धिम् ॥

His anxiety is that faith in the Śāstras should be restored once again in the land so that the people may abandon the new ways of life, conduct and dress which they have adopted quite in violation of the rules of their respective castes and families.

2. *Adharma, the Cause of Misery*

It is well known that people everywhere are now suffering. It can be confidently asserted that this suffering dates from their giving up the courses of conduct observed by their ancestors. When the practice of Dharma began to decline, suffering began. It has been mentioned already that it is only Dharma that sustains the entire universe and that it is the Veda that tells us what Dharma and Adharma are. A great poet has beautifully expressed this in the stanza:

उच्चैर्गतिर्जगति सिद्ध्यति धर्मतश्चेत्
तस्य प्रमा च वचनैः कृतकेतरैश्चेत् ।
तेषां प्रकाशनदशा च महीसुरैश्चेत्
तानन्तरेण नियतेत् क्व नु मत्प्रणामः ॥

"If it is true that advancement in the world is due to Dharma, if the authority for that Dharma is the eternal Veda and if the exposition of the Vedas is in the hands of the Brāhmaṇas, to whom else shall I pay my obeisance if not to them?"

It is seen from this that the Vedic teachings are learnt from the Brāhmaṇas, that Dharma is learnt from those Vedic teachings and that spiritual advancement is had from the observance of that Dharma. While so, the modern tendency is towards contempt for the Brāhmaṇas, contempt for the Vedas and contempt for Dharma. There is nothing therefore surprising in the result also being topsy-turvy. If one persists in acting unhealthily but wants at the same time to be very healthy, how can one have health? The people long for happiness, the result of virtue, but do not care to have virtue itself. They do not want misery, the fruit of sins, but take great pains to commit sins.

पुण्यस्य फलमिच्छन्ति पुण्यं नेच्छन्ति मानवाः ।
न पापफलमिच्छन्ति पापं कुर्वन्ति यत्नतः ॥

Even though people long for happiness, their conception of the means thereof happens to be perverted.

It may be asked: "Why does not the Lord incarnate now when Dharma is on the decline almost everywhere and people are suffering thereby?" He has given us the definite promise:

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदाऽऽत्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥

"Whenever Dharma fades and Adharma is on the ascendant, O Bhārata, I create Myself."

परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे ॥

"In every age I manifest Myself for the purpose of protecting the people who are good and for the destruction of those who do evil and for the establishment of Dharma."

Is it not proper for Him to carry out His promise seeing that Dharma has declined and Adharma is on the increase and to incarnate Himself for the protection of the good and the chastisement of the bad people now found in the world? Even an ordinary person is punctilious in carrying out his promise. Ought not the Lord to carry out His promise and take form now?

Such questions do, no doubt, seem reasonable, but the matter requires deeper consideration. The Lord does not as a rule incarnate at a time when the people themselves can set themselves aright. If only we realize that all our present sufferings are due to our own neglect of Dharma, we can very easily set ourselves aright.

The main reason for the deterioration of our Ācāra is contact with foreigners. The times also may be urged as an auxiliary cause, but it does not justify our saying to ourselves, "Such is the nature of the Kali age. What can we do? Everything is bound to deteriorate! Bad associations spoilt us and the times helped doing so." If we recognize these two as responsible for our present position, we will easily recognize that we did not make the necessary efforts to counteract them and that therefore we lost our Dharma. If we had exerted ourselves to the best of our capacities to observe our Dharmas and yet deteriorated, we may with some justification cast the blame on the times for not being helpful to us and for spoiling us. If two students had studied their lessons properly and if one of them passes in the examination and the other fails, we may with some propriety say that it was the latter's misfortune. If, however, he had always been lazy and neglecting his studies, is there any justification for ascribing his failure to misfortune? When the reason for the failure is quite obvious, what need is there to accuse an unseen cause? Similarly, when we do not make the least effort in the practice of Dharma, how can we with any propriety throw the blame on the times?

3. *Dharma, the Cause of Happiness*

We do not perform the Saṁdhya worship and offer the daily oblations and carry out the other duties enjoined upon us properly, we do not study the *Gītā* and other sacred literature and we offer as an excuse that we have no time for all these things. We find plenty of time to pore over the daily newspapers and for idle gossip. We have no time only to better ourselves. Our excuse of want of time really means that our mind is not there and we lack the necessary faith. We must gather merit whenever we find time. We must not waste any moment. We must try our best to deserve a higher state than what the present birth has given us. Does not an officer in the employ of the Government try to improve his prospects and get promoted to a higher post? Similarly when God has been pleased to give us this high status as man, is it not our duty to exert ourselves to the utmost to maintain that status and if possible to rise to higher and higher states of existence?

The Kṣattriya has a status by reason of his having a place in the State and the Vaiśya has his by reason of his wealth. The Brāhmaṇa gets the most covetable salary in the form of peace of mind. Who can say that any remuneration that other people may get is more valuable than this? Peace of mind is the bliss of Mokṣa itself. Is this not enough? It is said that a Brāhmaṇa who is discontented is lost:

असंतुष्टो द्विजो नष्टः

The peace obtainable by contentment cannot be easily got by anybody else. While so, is it proper at all to forego this happiness and hanker after sensual pleasures which end in misery? The great ancients have laid down:

ब्राह्मणस्य तु देहोऽयं नोपभोगाय कल्पते ।
इह क्लेशाय महते प्रेत्यानन्तसुखाय च ॥

"This body of the Brāhmaṇa is not given to him for the sake of sensuous enjoyment. It is meant for undergoing great suffering in the world and for leading to limitless happiness after death."

It is therefore the duty of the Brāhmaṇa to submit his body to suffering by making it perform the several Karmas prescribed for him by the Śāstras. Those who want sugar do not place sugarcanes on a pedestal and worship them. They crush them without the least compunction and extract the juice from them. Then only can the sweet juice be got and sugar made from them. Similarly, the Brāhmaṇa must give trouble to his body by engaging it in the performance of good Karmas. Just as the pleasure of testing sweet sugar is possible only if the canes are submitted to the crushing, so if we want lasting happiness the body must be put to penance. If we hesitate to injure the sugarcane, there can be got no sugar. The way therefore to attain happiness is by the performance of our ancient Dharmas. We must not neglect them. If, due to our attachment to our bodies or any other cause, we deviate from them, we cannot hope for happiness.

4. *Give Dharma a Trial*

We have tried for many years past the methods of obtaining happiness preached by the Westerners.

We have not reaped any benefit from them. Please consider well and try at least hereafter the methods preached by our ancients. Give them a fair trial, say, for about fifty years. Just as we turned to the West for the means of happiness, try to follow the methods taught by the Śāstras for the avoidance of misery. If we sit idle and yet talk of the ways to advancement, it is mere waste of time and energy. Our ancestors lived and practised our ancient modes of life and they had with them the efficient means for happiness. Though we have all these years learnt and practised the Western methods, we are no nearer to any source of happiness. Our ancestors had with them a very material and potent factor which we are lacking. That is Dharma. Practise Dharma at least for ten years and give it a trial. I am sure that the suffering which all of us are having will then disappear. The reason for the sufferings not leaving us is the want of proper comprehension of the means of happiness. Do not allow your perverse intellects to reason about what is laid down in the Śāstras. We go to the Śāstras for guidance only about matters beyond the reach of our intellects and senses. We have therefore to accept as final their decision on such matters.

I do not say that our boys ought not to be taught English. Such an education is certainly even necessary so long as the Government of our country is in the hands of the English-educated. But we must take care to see that our boys do not thereby imbibe any habits contrary to our Śāstras. They must not be allowed to take food at any and every place. We must give them the necessary conveniences to be pure in their food and in other matters as well. Their conduct must be unsullied. Further, at least for the purpose of correcting now and then the bad habits that may creep in, it is necessary to have at least a few people whose mode of life is exemplary. Taking them as their examples, the others may slowly reform themselves. If all get contaminated, there will be none who can serve as the seed of right conduct. Even if persons who refuse to be bound by the rules of Dhārmic conduct secede from us, it is the duty of at least the others to stick to their Dharma and to one another. It may be that the others may be moved to correct themselves later. If anybody declines to be bound by the rules of Dharma, it is our duty to segregate him from us. We should not in the least hesitate to do so on account of his worldly status or of his relationship to us. It does not matter who he is. If his conduct is reprehensible, do not associate with him. We must be prepared to give up such persons, whoever they may be, if their conduct is against Dharma. Did not the Emperor Sagara drive out of his kingdom itself his eldest son Asamañja when he was found drowning the children of the city in the river Sarayu and flagrantly violating Dharma? Similarly it is our duty not to associate with anybody who is acting against Dharma. If we hesitate to adopt this course, we ourselves will be seriously affected to our great prejudice.

In former days, even though the male members of the family went out anywhere, the womenfolk used to remain at home and scrupulously safeguard the caste Dharmas and the family traditions of conduct. It was mainly because of them that the caste Dharmas and family traditions were being preserved intact. Dharma was deep-rooted in them. Then they also came in for the modern education. They began to come out of their homes. They began also to compete with men for employment. It is no surprise therefore that family Dharma is deteriorating even among the womenfolk. There is not the slightest need for this education being given to them. You must try your best to put a stop, as far as you can, to such a kind of education being given them. It has been laid down:

पिता रक्षति कौमारे भर्ता रक्षति यौवने ।
पुत्रो रक्षति वार्धक्ये न स्त्री स्वातन्त्र्यमर्हति ॥

> "The father protects her in her childhood, the husband in her youth and the son in her old age. The woman shall not be independent."

What is meant by the Śāstras thereby is that no need or opportunity should be created or given to women to walk out of their home for finding the means of livelihood or for any other cause. The rule is intended only for their protection. The intention of the Śāstras is that women should never be left uncared for. They must never be put to the necessity of having to come out of their homes. They must ever remain there and carry out their own duties and safeguard the traditional observances of their castes and families. There is no other motive behind this injunction. If we give them a training in violation of this, they will go down; the family and the caste will follow suit. It is therefore very necessary to see that the course of conduct intended for women is not deviated from.

4. *Be Guided by Dharma*

What is it that accompanies us when we pass off from this body? Wealth and other things remain behind in the house itself. Friends and relatives come as far as the burning ground and return home from there. Only the good deeds and the evil ones done by us go with us when we go:

अर्था गृहे निवर्तन्ते श्मशाने मित्रबान्धवाः ।
सुकृतं दुष्कृतं चैव गच्छन्तमनुगच्छति ॥

We must therefore ascertain what deeds are good and what evil, and do the former and avoid the latter. If we do a good deed, it is not only we that have the benefit of it but many others who take us for guidance also will benefit. Even if they are at the start bad, they will turn to the right path in course of time. There are many people of other countries available for preaching to the world the pleasures of the world and the means of securing them. There are many such people even in our own land. But all those teachings have only the effect of increasing our desires and giving more unrest to our minds. If once we begin to widen the range of our desires, it will not suffice even if we obtain all the things available in the world. We will still want more and more. That will be a very painful situation. We must ourselves therefore put a limit to our desires. Is not a limit necessary to the efforts we have to make to secure the objects which cannot possibly accompany us after death? Is it not also necessary that we must have some time and energy to seek the supreme happiness of the Self which will ever abide with us? Does our mind ever turn in that direction? There are many who do not believe in the Śāstras and there are still others who do not practise what is stated therein though they retain the faith in them. It is therefore necessary that some people at least who have such faith should practise Dharma and preserve it. If they do so, they not only benefit themselves but those connected with them are also benefited, and in fact the whole world will benefit by them. If the number of persons who so practise Dharma goes on increasing, the suffering of the world will gradually disappear.

Real service to the Guru consists in thus preserving and maintaining the caste Dharmas and family traditional practices of each individual and performing the duties allotted to him. These alone will secure the good graces of the Guru. If the Guru is pleased, all our desires will be fulfilled. We therefore pray that by the grace of the great Guru all people will be blessed with strong faith in God and in Dharma.

CHAPTER IV

PROPER EDUCATION

1. *Learning and Wealth*

ALL persons desire to have knowledge and all persons desire to have happiness. But nobody takes care to enquire into the nature of that knowledge or of that happiness. The ancients have very beautifully and very clearly defined in a small stanza the relation between knowledge and happiness.

विद्या ददाति विनयं विनयाद् याति पात्रताम् ।
पात्रत्वाद्धनमाप्नोति धनाद्धर्मं ततः सुखम् ॥

"Knowledge produces modesty. From modesty, one gets worthiness and from worthiness wealth. From wealth one gets Dharma and from Dharma happiness."

In this context, the ultimate freedom from all bondage and the absolute happiness of that state are not meant nor the knowledge of the Self leading thereto. The passage refers only to the knowledge as ordinarily understood. We learn from this stanza two very important truths: first that true knowledge must lead to modesty and second that Dharma is the cause of happiness. We also clearly see from this that, if any kind of education does not lead to modesty, it is not entitled to the name of knowledge. We see in these days many a kind of learning being considered as knowledge and many an institution imparting such a learning claiming to be institutes of knowledge. But we have to see if the persons who have studied in and passed out of such institutions have imbibed the characteristic of humility. If we do so, we can easily judge the propriety of their claims. We learn a further truth from this stanza that only that wealth which is got through the channel of knowledge and humility will be useful for Dharma.

The father is called Pitā in Saṁskrit. This name is given to him as he "protects" his children. We must consider whether many fathers in these days really protect their children. We can say of them that they protect their children if they do what is actually beneficial to them. If the fathers are instrumental in their children deteriorating in their conduct and getting even impure food and are content to have them somehow acquire the capacity to earn money, they are really spoiling their children. How then can they claim the name of fathers? As such fathers themselves spoil their boys, the boys in their turn when they grow up and become independent naturally disregard them and exhibit even a contempt for them. But there are some fathers who are content to accept this position and reconcile themselves to such behaviour on the part of their sons by reason of their earning money. We have never seen happiness flow out of wealth. However much of wealth a man may have, it cannot directly help him to get relief from hunger. He must part with some money to get together some articles of food and then have them cooked and then eat them. Till then hunger will not leave him. Thus money is not an immediate means of happiness. But it may be usefully employed in the performance of Dharma. We must therefore learn well the nature of Dharma and the nature of happiness. It is for the purpose of getting an accurate knowledge of the proper Dharma and of true happiness that a study of the Śāstras is necessary. We may also know about them from those who have made such a study and are practising what is taught in the Śāstras.

2. *Dharma Sustains the Universe*

If Dharma is, as stated before, responsible for the sustenance of the world, it becomes in effect identical with the nature of God. If we want to resort to it with a view to attain a particular object, we must necessarily conduct ourselves in conformity with His commands recorded in the Śrutis, Smṛtis and other Śāstras. Nothing is possible in the world if there is no fixity in the laws governing it. A particle of dust is the smallest of small things which we can see with our own eyes. Even this will not remain forever in mid-space but must slowly and gradually come down to the earth. We see no particle of dust in the air soon after a shower of rain as the latter brings them all down. When even a particle of dust is unable to remain suspended in space, how does it happen that the whole of this earth, heavy as it is, is suspended in space without any support? Even if we grant that the great Ādiśeṣa and the eight elephants of the quarters support the earth, we must realize that the earth and Ādiśeṣa and the eight elephants all put together are still suspended in space. It is stated that this broad earth that we see is floating on the waters beneath it. If we throw a small pebble in a stream, it immediately sinks down and does not float at all. But this heavy earth with all the mountains and forests on it does not sink into the waters, and all this is suspended in mid-space. What shall we say of the greatness of God who has created them and has made all this possible? It is only because everything in the universe is subject to His inviolable laws that the universe is running smoothly. It is only because of the power of the great Lord that the earth on which we are seated does not go down, that the sun, the moon and the stars shine in the firmament and give us light, that ether, the directions, the earth and the ocean are steadied in their respective places and functions. It is said:

द्यौः सचन्द्रार्कनक्षत्रं खं दिशो भूर्महोदधिः ।
वासुदेवस्य वीर्येण विधृतानि महात्मनः ॥

The poet Bhartṛhari says:

सूर्यो भ्राम्यति नित्यमेव गगने तस्मै नमः कर्मणे ।

". . . I bow to that Karma according to which the sun circles round daily."

It must be understood that the obeisance is not to the inert Karma but only to the omniscient Lord who rules over that Karma. We are all able to live only because of the energy of the sun. If he does not shine, we will all be in utter darkness and, if there is no heat, we cannot possibly exist. No plant or shrub can live without it. If the sun is not subject to fixed laws, there can be no system of day and night for us nor can there be any seasons like spring, etc. Even he, therefore, is bound by the laws of God. The Upaniṣad well says that the wind blows out of fear of the Lord and the sun rises out of the same fear. It is seen from all these considerations that there is a Lord above all the universe who supports it by being its substratum, who makes all things in the universe conform to His laws and who gives unfailingly the fruits of the several Karmas done by the countless individual souls in that universe. As it is He alone who holds under His sway the entire universe, there can be no limit either to His power or to His knowledge. Some happenings in the universe may seem unreasonable to our limited intellects. But the fact is that even they happen only properly and in accordance with fixed laws.

A person who had not much faith in God was once passing through a forest in the hot sun. He felt very much tired and laid himself down in the shade of a big banyan tree. He noticed its branches reaching far into the skies and noticed at the same time how small its fruits were. He thought: "Even the tiny creeper of the sweet gourd yields a fruit very big in size. While so, how much bigger the fruit of this expansive tree must reasonably be? If there were a God and if He had the slightest intelligence, would He have given such a big fruit for so small a creeper as that of the sweet gourd and such a small fruit for so big a tree as the banyan tree?" With this soliloquy he sank into slumber till a few minutes later he was awakened by the falling of a few banyan fruits on his body. His thoughts immediately changed and he said to himself: "Aha! If God had given this tree fruits proportionate to its size, my head and other limbs would have been crushed and broken by the fall of the fruits and I must have immediately succumbed. Evidently God knew that people like myself may resort to the tree for rest and shade and has therefore ordained that it must bear only small fruits!"

Similarly there are many things which are beyond the comprehension of our intellects. It is not therefore possible with the aid of our intellects to find out or determine the nature of Dharma, the Law of God. Our intellects cannot by themselves decide what action is good and what action is bad. That is why the Śāstras have taken upon themselves the function of telling us what is good and what is not.

3. *The Function of the Śāstras*

Further it is the function of the Śāstras to give us knowledge of things which cannot be had by any other means of knowledge. We have therefore to learn from the Śāstras alone the truths about rebirth, about other worlds of experience and about God. If we accept as true only those things which are directly experienced by us, the white conch must be yellow for it seems so to the jaundiced eyes. Even the bright sun will seem yellow to one whose eyes are affected by jaundice. A rope in semi-darkness appears as a serpent. Are not these directly perceived as such? Can we believe that they are therefore also true? Further no activity in the world is possible if anybody insists upon accepting as truth only that which he perceives by direct experience. Many things have to be learnt by one who wants to make a livelihood in the world. He cannot possibly insist upon everyone of them being demonstrated to him before his very eyes before he will accept them as true. While it is so even with regard to ordinary worldly matters, what doubt can there be that the Śāstras are our sole guide in matters beyond the scope of the other means of knowledge, dealing with Dharma or with *Brahman*?

The main object of the sciences is to refine our intellects so as to make them competent to comprehend many subtle truths and to make us grasp the truths with the aid of such sharpened intellects. It may seem to some that the sciences like Tarka and Mīmāṁsā clash with each other. The Mīmāṁsaka says that there is no God; the Vedāntī says that there is. If, however, the matter is deeply considered, it will be found that the Tārkika wanted to establish by the aid of logic itself the existence of God and that the Mīmāṁsaka only refuted the possibility of doing so by the aid of mere logic. The latter's object was really to emphasize that the existence of God was not a matter which can be proved merely by intellectual reasoning. The several systems of thought are so graded as to give an impetus to all to seek truth by employing their intellects according to their training and prenatal tendencies. While so, there will be no use if we do not use the intellects in search of truth but stop with merely sharpening them.

That alone is entitled to the name of knowledge which makes clear to us the nature of the Self and gets us the everlasting bliss of Freedom. Similarly that alone is true Karma that does not lead us further into bondage. All other kinds of Karma are mere waste of energy. The learning which sharpens our intellect without helping us to attain freedom is no better than proficiency in some art.

तत्कर्म यन्न बन्धाय सा विद्या या विमुक्तये ।
आयासायापरं कर्म विद्याऽन्या शिल्पनैपुणम् ॥

The kind of learning imparted in the schools in these days falls only in this category. It can help us only to give us intelligence enough to get on in the world and perhaps escape a few of its troubles.

There is a small story in this connection. A king woke up one morning and looked out of his window. A boy was just then passing along the road. His was the first human face that the king saw that day. While retiring from the window, his head hit the shutters and was slightly hurt. The king at once became very angry. He immediately ordered his servants to get hold of that boy and execute him without delay. They accordingly took him to the place of execution. The boy then asked them, "Why have you brought me to this place? What crime have I committed?" They replied, "When the king opened his eyes in the morning, they fell upon you and he immediately had his head hurt. You are therefore condemned to death." On hearing this, the boy said, "Then it is all right. There is, however, a custom to grant a man condemned to death the boon of fulfilling his last wish. I have also a wish. Please fulfil that also before carrying out the royal command." Then they asked him, "What is your wish?" He replied, "I wish to see the king once. Then you may carry out his commands." The request was reasonable and they took him to the king. Then he addressed the king and said, "O king, why has such a dire punishment been awarded to me?" When the king explained the reason, the boy said, "O gracious king, as the result of seeing me, your majesty got a slight hit on the head and you have awarded me a sentence of death for this crime of meeting your eyes. It so happens that your majesty's was the first human face I saw this morning with the result that I am to be hanged. May I know what punishment your majesty proposes to give to yourself for this happening?" The king thought for a moment, gave up his anger and admired the quick intelligence of the boy and cancelled immediately his unjust commands.

The ordinary kinds of learning may help us to acquire such ready wit which may be useful on occasions. They may even help us to tide over our ordinary inconveniences. The modern education may sharpen our intellects in some such manner. But it cannot help us to the knowledge capable of securing permanent happiness to us.

4. *True Happiness*

All beings long for happiness and abhor misery. They desire also that the happiness must be ever with them and that they must not have misery even for a moment. There is no use at all in having happiness one day and misery the next. Nobody desires to have such a state of things. We have to consider a little what happiness is. Ordinary people who do not probe into the nature of things think that it is happiness to have children, wives, friends and so on, and to possess wealth, grain and other things in abundance. If, however, a little thought is bestowed on the matter, it will be clearly seen that none of these are aids to happiness and that on the other hand they lead really to misery. If it is the nature of sugar to be sweet, it must taste sweet to all. It cannot be sweet to one, bitter to another, pungent to a third and sour to a fourth. Even in these days we see in this world many persons who have no desire for friends, wives or children. We also see in them the absence of any desire to own any houses or gardens or other properties. They desire not also any wealth or grain. We see also many persons who have wives, children and other such requisites and are yet miserable in spite of having them. There are in the world many Sannyāsīs who have discarded all these as ephemeral and are quite happy. Can we say that they have no brains or any power of discrimination? Do we not see everyday persons having wives, children and wealth in abundance and yet having no happiness? If all these are really the means of happiness, why are they not happy? An emperor who rules over the entire earth owns all the things in it. Even he cannot say that he is always happy. Even he has many a painful experience now and then, for there can be no being born without having an admixture of both pain and happiness. If all these facts are borne in mind, we will clearly see that no sort of worldly enjoyment is a means to true happiness and that they are all but momentary.

If we want to be without any sort of pain, we must ascertain first the cause of pain. A little consideration will make it clear to us that the root cause of all sorrow is the mistaken identification of the Self with the body. As we look upon this body as the Self, we are afraid that somebody may hurt it; we begin to hate others who, we conceive, are likely to hurt it; and we land ourselves in misery. Ignorance alone is the prime cause of all misery. The harm that we apprehend from those whom we look upon as our enemies is very insignificant. In fact, so long as we have this identification of the Self with the body, we alone are our greatest enemies. The Lord has pointed this out in the passage:

आत्मैव रिपुरात्मनः ।

That is, ignorant as we are, we are our real enemies and none else. We can easily see that fear and sorrow naturally result from this mistaken identification. While we are quite awake and if we happen to notice the smallest insect come near us, we feel afraid. We are not in the least afraid during sleep even though a big tiger may come and squat by our side. As during the waking state, we consider the body as ourselves, we get that fear and the consequent grief. As this conception is absent during the state of sleep, there is neither fear nor grief.

5. *True Knowledge*

As this mistaken identification of the Self with the body is thus the cause of all sin and pain in the world, it is necessary we should get rid of ignorance, the primary cause of this mistake. The capacity to dispel such ignorance is only in the knowledge arising from the Vedānta Śāstras. The name 'knowledge' is really appropriate to that kind of knowledge which is capable of dispelling the ignorance, the cause of bondage of phenomenal life. Even the sciences like logic are said to be not worth the name of knowledge as they do not lead directly to the realization of the Self. There is no justification therefore for the ideas that the kinds of education imparted in the modern schools are indispensable as coming under the category of knowledge and that happiness and enlightenment can be had through them. Even if we resort to such education for the facility of worldly intercourse, we must ever bear in mind that to attain the highest good it is necessary to have training in the knowledge that will lead to permanent happiness. Such a knowledge is enunciated in the Vedānta Śāstras. That is, only that kind of knowledge which arises from practising and realizing the truths laid down in the Vedānta Śāstras is competent to lead us to eternal happiness.

It is not an easy thing to get such knowledge. If we are to get the bliss permanent, all impediments in the way must be cleared. Then a competent Guru must be sought and waited upon till we become worthy of his grace. We must learn from him the truths of the Vedānta, grasp them properly, cogitate over them deeply and make incessant effort to realize them in actual experience. This is quite unlike other kinds of learning, and the method of obtaining it also differs from others. We must be steadfast in the Dharmas individually prescribed for each of us and we must carry out scrupulously and with faith the duties ordained on us with due regard to our respective Varṇas and Āśramas and we must thereby attain purity of mind and thus qualify ourselves for receiving the knowledge of *Brahman*. It will be an initial step taken in the direction of that goal if we at least perform with faith, in accordance with the Śāstras and with the proper intonation, the daily

Saṁdhyā worship and other rites which are necessary for maintaining the Brāhmaṇyam in us Brāhmaṇas. If the others also perform properly their respective duties and respect the deities, the Brāhmaṇas and others, they also will progress from their present condition to better and better states and there can be no doubt that in the end they will attain even the Highest Good.

CHAPTER V

THE VALUE OF THE ŚĀSTRAS

1. *No Effort is Ever Wasted*

WE take much pains to acquire worldly knowledge and to secure bodily comforts. Similarly we must take pains to acquire knowledge about other worlds through a searching study of our Śāstras, about the means of reaching such worlds and also about the means of realizing the bliss of the Self and to put such means into practice. In this world the king punishes those who act against the laws of the State. The king rewards those who are helpful to him. Does the king award the fruits of deeds of spiritual merit or does he punish those who commit sins? The king can take notice only of the good and bad deeds in so far as they affect the State or the society and mete out rewards or punishments for them. The king does not take notice of acts which generate spiritual merit (*puṇya*) or demerit (*pāpa*) which fructify only in other worlds. Nor can the king possibly attend to them.

It is necessary to postulate the existence of God at least to give the fruits of such acts. What reward can a king give to one who performs the Jyotiṣṭoma sacrifice? God alone can give it. If the fame of having performed a sacrifice is itself the reward, what use is such a fame if he happens to die soon after the performance of the sacrifice and cannot therefore enjoy it? A man borrows heavily and runs away to Pondicherry.[1] As that place is subject to another Government, the officers of this State can do nothing there. It is not possible for the king to punish such a man who has hidden all his monies and has cheated his creditors. If we are to take his having to leave his home itself as punishment for his fraud, what shall we say of such persons as take with them to Pondicherry their wives and children also and live quite a happy life there? How can this be a punishment for them? Do they not really deserve to be punished for their misdeeds? At least for this, that is, for awarding pain and pleasure to those who commit bad and good deeds, to whatever places they may go, we must accept the existence of God as the Rewarder and Punisher for the entire universe.

Further, do we get an employment at the very place where we had our education? Ordinarily, the place of education is one and the place of employment is another. Does the thief get his punishment at the scene of the theft? He steals in a house and undergoes his sentence in a prison. Similarly the place where Dharma and Adharma are done is one. The place where their fruits are experienced, Heaven or Hell, is elsewhere. Sometimes a thief is caught red-handed and is immediately beaten. Similarly there are some acute sins and there are some high and noble deeds which bear fruit even here. But ordinarily the result is experienced only in other worlds. Again, it may happen that a man by his deeds deserves a kind of misery experienceable by a dog. It cannot be experienced in this birth. Similarly it may happen that another man by his deeds deserves a kind of happiness which can be had by Gandharvas and the like. He cannot possibly enjoy it now in this birth.

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[1] This was written when Pondicherry was a French Settlement.

It therefore stands to reason that we must accept as true these three, namely, God, other worlds and rebirth. We give the name of Nāstika to the person who denies the existence of all these three. We include among Āstikas even those who believe in anyone of these three. We will behave properly if we know that there is a God who well knows the deeds good and bad that we do and is capable of appropriately rewarding or punishing us for them. If, instead of assuming that the good and bad deeds will not come with us after death, we believe that we must experience their fruits either in other worlds or in other births, even then our behaviour will be proper. If a person is afraid of going to a prison, he will not steal. Just as we fear the king believing that he will punish us if we commit any crime, we must fear God believing that He will certainly commit us to the prison, *i.e.*, Hell if we act against Dharma.

2. *Virtue and Vice only for Man*

There is no question of Puṇya or Pāpa for birds and beasts. They have no capacity to know what is right and what is wrong. It may be asked: Is not a cow that is seen biting the green crops on another's field sent to the cattle-pound and imprisoned there and is not this a punishment for her wrongful act? But the intention of the person who takes her to the pound and locks her up is not to punish the cow. It is done only with the intention of bringing home to the owner of the cow that he must see that his cow does not graze on another's land and that he must realize his mistake in not properly minding the cow. The cow has no power of discrimination. The cow is locked up in the pound only to remind the owner of his duty to see that the properties of others are not injured by his cow. As the owner of the cow is endowed with the capacity to discriminate between right and wrong, he will take care that his cow does not tresspass on others' lands from the next day onwards. The locking up of the cow in the pound is really therefore a punishment to the owner. As man alone has the power to know what is right and what is wrong, Puṇya and Pāpa are for him alone. The Śāstras prescribe a bath at Rameśvaram, pilgrimage and other things. But have we heard of a tiger being asked to take a bath at Rameśvaram, for expiating any sin or is it ever tried or sentenced for any crime? The rules of injunction and prohibition are therefore applicable only to man.

If a man commits a crime and its appropriate punishment is meted out to him by the king, it is not necessary that he should have another punishment at the hands of God. Divine punishment is sure to follow if he gets no punishment in this world. It is no doubt true that fire will burn us whether we touch it wilfully or through ignorance of its nature. But the person who knows that its nature is to scorch will be careful in approaching fire. Similarly a person who knows that, even though he may not get punishment in this world, he will certainly be punished by God in the other world or in another birth will not dare to commit a sin. In the *Kaṭhopaniṣad*, Yama says:

अयं लोको नास्ति पर इति मानी पुनः पुनर्वशमापद्यते मे ॥

"He who thinks that this world alone is real and that there are no other worlds where the fruits of good and bad deeds are experienced repeatedly comes under my sway."

If a man knows that a serpent will bite him, he will be afraid to go near it. If he is afraid and keeps at a distance, he will not be bitten. Similarly if a person is afraid of sinful acts and desists from doing them, he cannot get misery, the result of sin. It is therefore necessary that fear of sin must ever be with us.

3. *Degrees of Faith*

We stated before that those who believe in any of the three things, the existence of God as the Rewarder of all actions, the existence of rebirth and the existence of other worlds are considered Āstikas. But it cannot be said of the people of these days that they have really any firm faith in these things. The attitude of the majority of the people is only like this: "The Śāstras enunciate the existence of these three. We do not know whether it is true or not. It may be that it is all a lie. If, however, it so chances that their statement is true that there is really a God and that there is really a further birth, what are we to do? We shall therefore be cautious enough not to act against the Śāstras, so far as we can, to guard against such a contingency." As they do not have the daring to say: "There is no God, no other world or no other birth as stated in the Śāstras," we cannot include them in the category of Nāstikas. We have to include them in a way among the Āstikas themselves.

There are two boys who do not perform their daily Saṁdhyā worship. If they are asked whether they have performed it on any particular day, one of them boldly says, "I never perform Saṁdhyā," and speaks the truth; and the other says, "I have performed it," and thus boldly tells a lie. Let us consider which is the better boy of these two. The fault of not performing the Saṁdhyā is equally present in both of them. It would seem therefore that the boy who tells the truth is preferable to the boy who tells a falsehood. But the matter requires deeper consideration. The fault of not performing the Saṁdhyā is no doubt common to both. But it must be noted that the boy, who says unblushingly that he never does it, does not admit that the Saṁdhyā is a duty which one has to perform and that the boy, who says, out of the fear of blame, that he has performed it, concedes that it is his duty to perform it. The latter therefore, though he tells a lie, can be classed as an Āstika, for, as he retains the idea that Saṁdhyā is an obligatory duty, it is possible to reform him. As regards the former who has not that idea, it will be very difficult to reform him. In these days, therefore, we must include among Āstikas even those who say, "It is no doubt necessary to observe the rules of Dharma but I find it inconvenient to do so," in spite of their not doing any acts of Dharma themselves. Thus the Āstikas of these days are of several sorts according to the grades of their faith, and this difference will necessarily find reflected in the benefits they get. For, how can the result be the same for a person who has intense faith in the truth of the Śāstras and scrupulously acts according to their dictates and for a person who has not full faith in the Śāstras but does not give up the duties ordained therein and for a person who simply says that the Śāstras are no doubt authority but does nothing in conformity with them? These three sets of persons are decidedly far superior to those who are prepared to characterize the Śāstras as falsehoods, and keep quite aloof from their dictates. It is only in this sense that we included all these three in the class of Āstikas.

There is a very great difference between an act done with faith and an act done without faith. Similarly there is a very great difference between an act done in ignorance. Ordinarily we do not act either with full knowledge or with full faith. But an act well done though in ignorance has its appropriate result. We may say, for example, that we owe our present lives to some good deeds done by us in former lives accidentally as it were without much thought of their implications or results.

4. *The Śāstras and Reason*

No Śāstra is needed to tell us, "Eat if you are hungry." It requires no Śāstra to tell us, "If your body is dirty, take a bath." But we cannot know which method of eating or which method of bathing will result in Puṇya or religious merit. The Śāstra is necessary to tell us this. A simple bath does result in the purity of the body but the same bath taken in conformity with the rules laid down in the Śāstras yields the additional benefit of Puṇya or spiritual merit. If we can get two benefits by a single effort, we need not certainly forego one of them. The daily worship, the going round in temples, the prostrations to the Sun, and other courses of action prescribed by the Śāstras not only help us to have strong bodies and to lead healthy lives but it is said that they result also in an unseen benefit called Puṇya. When there are thus two kinds of benefit possible, is it anything but foolishness to say that we shall have only one of them? When the courses of conduct prescribed by the Śāstras are themselves competent to give us health and also an unseen spiritual benefit, why should we resort to costly and foreign games and exercises merely for preserving health in imitation of the white people? It is quite natural that the circulation of blood is hampered by always sitting in an office chair and it is also reasonable that some exercise is necessary to restore the proper circulation. But is it necessary to get that circulation only by playing balls? It sometimes happens that in the heat of such playing the hands and legs and even the head get injured. No such injury is possible if we go round a temple. The circulation of blood will be restored equally by this. We have heard of even teeth being knocked out in playing balls. Is it necessary to receive the dust of these balls on our heads as if it were sanctified rice? Is it necessary at all to seek the advice of the white people on such matters? Why should we not listen to the advice of our own Śāstras? Is it not proper to observe the activities prescribed in the Śāstras and earn thereby both bodily health and God's grace rather than do something which is likely to injure us even physically?

In the worldly courses of conduct, the happiness that can be obtained can only be had mixed with pain. If a person takes daily some nourishing food, the body will become fat and stored with excess energy. The moderners will agree that to reduce this a day's fast once in a fortnight is desirable. But they will ask, why should it be on the day of Ekādaśī and why not we have it on any day we like? We might as well ask, why not on that day? Ekādaśī is a day sacred to God Viṣṇu. When we do a good thing, is it not proper that we do it on a good day? It gives us not only a worldly benefit to our bodies but an unseen benefit or Puṇya. A day's fast will produce some heat and bile in the body and also cause some constipation. To remove these undesirable effects and to give us perfect health the Śāstras have prescribed as items of the next day meal the leaves of the Agathi plant and the fruits of the Amla tree. It may be asked, why not prescribe castor oil as that also will bring down the heat? But as stated above the Śāstras do not prescribe any course with the intention of securing a perceptible benefit alone. Nor do the Śāstras have authority simply because they lead to such perceptible benefits.

We only desired to point out that, inasmuch as both the kinds of benefit ensue from a proper performance of the activities prescribed in the Śāstras, it is not reasonable to treat with indifference the aspect of unseen spiritual benefit obtainable from such activities. It is not proper to draw attention to the purification of blood and other symbols of health as the perceptible results of prostrations to the Sun and other activities as if such perceptible results are the main aim of the Śāstras in prescribing those activities. If we were to grant that the perceptible results are alone the objective of such activities, there are many good activities prescribed in the Śāstras for which we cannot conceive any perceptible objective and we will have to give them up. Further as the function of the Śāstras is to prescribe the means which cannot be learnt by direct experience or by inference, it cannot be that the perceptible result can have a place in their objective. Their objective is only one, namely, the unseen spiritual effect. The perceptible results are only in the nature of bye-products. For example, we rear mango trees only for the sake of their fruits. But the leaves, the shade and the scent that we get from them are also got as bye-products. The Śāstras call such a benefit secondary. It will come of its own accord. It will come even if not wanted. Scorching is natural to fire whether you touch it intentionally or not. Similarly whether you intend or not, the perceptible results are bound to attend the doing of any act; but as they are only secondary effects no independent effort is needed to produce them.

5. *The Authority of the Vedas*

The Lord has pointed out in the *Gītā* the truth that nobody remains inactive even for a moment. All activities are no doubt troublesome. But there is a great difference in the results of the Karmas done in accordance with the Śāstras and of those done in violation of them. If the Karmas ordained by the Śāstras are performed, the result will be happiness. Other Karmas will not yield such a result. If we believe in the Veda Śāstras, the Word of God, and act according to them, God is pleased with us and shows His grace to us. If it seems that the trouble in pursuing this path is very great, we must remember that the result is still greater and engage ourselves in those activities. As a matter of fact, the trouble in other kinds of action is in no way less and it may be that this trouble alone is the result. We must therefore adopt only those activities which are prescribed in the Śāstras as they tend to secure for us the grace of God and happiness, and we will surely get thereby the perceptible result of comfort here below and also the imperceptible result of Puṇya or spiritual merit.

The Vedas enjoin us to perform the worship of the Saṁdhyā everyday. The Vedas will never prescribe a fruitless task. How are we to prove that their statements are false? How does the judge decide in courts of law whether the statement made by a person is true or false? Whatever he says is listened to attentively and then, if it is found that any former statement of his is inconsistent with any later one or if his statement is opposed to truth as determined with reference to other sources of knowledge, his statement is considered false and he is characterized a liar. Similarly, all that is laid down in the Vedas must be first clearly grasped by our minds and then only can we possibly embark upon an enquiry as to whether there are any mutually contradictory statements there or whether there is anything said which contradicts the truths otherwise determined. We do not even study the Vedas. We waste our time in poring over newspapers. But we are quite ready, however, to pronounce decided opinions upon the Vedas. It is quite improper to take up such an attitude. We must first learn what the Vedas and other Śāstras say; then only may we proceed to determine whether there is anything there opposed to established truths or whether there is any self-contradiction, and then, if we find any such defects, we will be justified in discarding them.

If the matter is deeply enquired into, it will be found as a matter of fact that there is no such self-contradiction or opposition to any other truth. As this great characteristic is found in the Vedas, some say that the Vedas are the Word of God. Even if we apply the test that the authority of a statement depends upon the worth of the individual who makes it, how will it be possible to characterize as false the statements of God the omniscient? If we say that the Vedas owe their authority to their being the Word of God, we necessarily say that that authority is dependent on and is derived from God. Some are afraid to ascribe such a subordinate position to the Vedas. They say that the Vedas are authoritative in themselves, that is, the authority is inherent in the Vedas themselves as being Truth and not derived from the persons who gave them out, that in fact the Vedas are eternal and were never created by anybody, not even by God, and that God is no more than their promulgator. It is mainly to demonstrate that there are no defects at all attributable to the Vedas that the Mīmāṁsa Śāstra has been evolved.

The means to happiness is Dharma. Dharma is learnt from the Vedas. The significance of the Vedic teachings is imparted to us by the Guru. If we therefore have intense faith in the Guru, the meaning of the Vedas will be clear to us. If the Vedas are clear to us, the nature of Dharma will be clear to us. And if we observe Dharma properly, happiness will result of its own accord. But in these days, either due to contact with foreigners or due to other reasons, devotion to the Guru, faith in the Vedas and attention to Dharma have all declined. While so, how can we expect that happiness alone, which is but the result of all these, must be with us? People suffer only because of this reason. The primary cause of all the various miseries found in villages and towns is nothing but this culpable neglect of Dhārmic conduct. If only the people regain their devotion to the Guru and perform the Vedic duties as taught by him, they will all be freed from misery and will be happy.

CHAPTER VI

THE DUTY OF MAN

1. Grades of Beings

THE beings in the world can be classified under two heads, the unmoving (*Acara*) and the moving (*Cara*). The unmoving are the trees and plants. The moving beings are of three sorts: the lower animals, the human beings and the divine beings. Among these we see by experience and learn from the Śāstras also that the lower animals suffer a great deal, that the divine beings have a great deal of enjoyment and that the human beings have an admixture of both suffering and enjoyment. Among the human beings themselves various grades are perceivable in their happiness, suffering and knowledge. As no differentiation is properly possible in the effects unless there is differentiation in the antecedent causes, we have necessarily to grant that there must have been differentiation even in the causal stage. God, the Creator of the universe, is quite independent and may be supposed to create this universe with all the differences in it because He so wills and has no need to assign or depend upon any reason for doing so. If such a proposition is made, that is, that He Himself, of His own accord, creates some persons as happy and some others as miserable, some persons as intelligent and some others as dull, He will necessarily be open to two charges, one of partiality and the other of mercilessness. He will be just like any of us and must forfeit His status as God. His declaration:

समोहं सर्वभूतेषु न मे द्वेष्योऽस्ति न प्रियः ।

> " I am the same in respect to all created beings.
> There is none hateful nor dear to me,"

will be falsified.

We are not prepared to accept such a conclusion. We see in the world that even among the children born of the same parents there is a lot of difference in their respective capacities for knowledge, and so on. Prahlāda, Hlāda and Anuhlāda were all sons of Hiraṇyakaśipu, but were certainly not of the same type. The Purāṇas tell us that, though Hiraṇyakaśipu was a hater of Viṣṇu, his son Prahlāda was a great devotee of His. It cannot therefore be said that blood connection and other circumstances are any determining factors. Even twins differ. Nor can we attribute such differences to the difference in the times of birth. Time is not perceptible to our senses and how can we ever know what influence it has in creating the differences? Knowledge is attained only through direct perception or by inference or from the authoritative word. As perception cannot be had of matters beyond the reach of the senses, this kind of knowledge about the influence of time cannot be had by direct perception. As inference arises only with reference to perceived objects, it has no scope here. Nor can it be obtained by means of the authoritative word. The word of authority is twofold, the lay and the Śāstraic. As the range of the lay word is limited to such things as can be learnt through direct perception or inference, it cannot concern itself with matters beyond their scope or claim to have any authority in such matters. The lay word is therefore useless for the matter now in question. As the Śāstras do not say anywhere that time is a cause of differences, the Śāstraic word does not help us in making any such supposition. Further as we see that a quality present in one individual is absent in another born elsewhere though at the same moment of time, the causal nature attributed to time is clearly negatived. In matters therefore beyond the reach of our intellects we have to accept the statements that the Śāstras alone are our guide. Our sole refuge is the Śrutis and the Smṛtis which proclaim, for example:

"A man is good because of his good deeds, and bad because of his bad deeds."

"The souls get different births to enable them to have embodiments in consonance with their previous deeds and knowledge."

"Some are born as trees and plants. Their previously acquired knowledge, Karma and impressions accompany them. Those who have conducted themselves properly get good births and those who have conducted themselves disgracefully get disgraceful births."

" A man is unconsciously impelled by the training he has had in the previous birth."

Among the beings who thus get embodied as trees, animals, human or divine beings, it is seen that the state of being a divine being is the result of pure meritorious deeds, that the state of being born as a plant, tree or animal is the result of extremely bad deeds, and that the birth as a human being is the result of an admixture of good and bad deeds.

2. *Competence of Man*

Of those three sets of beings, the intelligence of the animals clouded as it is by thick ignorance brought on by excessive sin cannot grasp at any conception of the Self as distinct from the body, and the animals are therefore incompetent to engage themselves in any kind of activity prescribed by the Śāstras. Though the celestial beings have certainly this knowledge, they are also disqualified for any Śāstraic activity. Sri Sabara has pointedly stated in his commentaries: "The celestial beings have none as there are no other celestial beings." That is, as the Śāstraic activities are to be addressed to the deities like Indra, Agni and others, as it is inconceivable that the deities in case they perform any sacrifices can offer oblations to themselves and as there are no deities other than themselves to whom they can offer oblations, the activities prescribed by the Śāstras are not intended to be performed by the celestial beings. It is seen from all these considerations that the Śāstras look upon man alone as competent to perform the activities prescribed by them.

The birth as a human being therefore is not only the result of past deeds but the means of doing fresh deeds. The other states of being are only results of past deeds. It is therefore seen that the soul in a human embodiment does good deeds or bad deeds or both deeds mixed together and takes another embodiment according to the nature of these deeds. Statements like, "The Soul under the bondage of Karma takes various bodies as man, beast, bird and other animals and after suffering countless kinds of grief and sorrow in the eighty-four hundred thousands of possible births attains the status of man at the end," only mean that the individual soul by reason of his ignorance has to experience all the effects of his sins and can return to the human embodiment again only after exhausting them. If one kills a Brāhmaṇa or commits another equally heinous crime, the Śāstras say that he takes embodiment as "a dog, a pig, an ass, a camel, a bull, a sheep, other animals, birds, then as a Cāṇḍāla or a Pulkasa," the lowest of human beings. Similarly, when the effect of the good deeds is exhausted, one has to return to the human world. Even those therefore who have done extraordinarily good deeds have necessarily to return to humanity at the end. The Vedas say: "They stay there till they fall and then come from that world to this for performing Karma again." This means that the return to this world is certain even for them. Nobody therefore need think that he has got this human embodiment now for the first time.

In accordance with what has been stated above we can explain the differences in the experiences of pain or pleasure found in the several beings in the world as due to the differences in their respective activities in their previous births. If the fruits of the deeds done in former births are experienced in later births, it will be seen that death and birth, birth and death, are alternating in an unending series. Phenomenal life is therefore considered to be beginningless.

3. Wasted Opportunities

Though we get human embodiments on innumerable occasions in the course of this beginningless phenomenal life, what benefit have we reaped thereform? Did we make any effort to secure permanent happiness? Or did we make any effort to eradicate misery altogether? If we urge the excuse now that, as the present age is Kali, our minds are muddy, did we not have embodiments in the very pure age like Kṛta? Did we not have then the benefit of seeing many a great person who shared the greatness of God Himself? Why should we go as far as the Kṛta Yuga? Have not many sages appeared as incarnations of God even in this age of Kali and have we not seen them? Have we not drunk from their gracious lips their sacred teachings sweet and invigorating as nectar? Were not those words capable of acting as boats to take to the other shore the people drowning in the ocean of phenomenal life infested with countless alligators known as troubles? In spite of such supreme help, did we reach the goal of life? Did we make any attempt to stem the current of our minds which were branching away as they liked? Did we make the slightest effort to tread, as far as it was possible for us, the path that they so kindly showed to us? We did nothing of the sort. We were content to live on just as we were born. We contracted, however, the craze for gold and in pursuit of the same roamed about in all directions. We wandered as we liked, without caring for our caste, our laws, our family or our stage in life. We forgot that the sensual objects were pleasant and cool only like the shade under the hissing hood of an angry serpent and we sought them as capable of giving us happiness. We only enlisted ourselves on the side of Duryodhana who saw and heard the Lord in person and yet did not profit thereby.

If we go on in this reckless fashion, how are we ever to get freed from bondage? How can we ever hope to have everlasting happiness? Is it for this that we have got this human birth? It is far better to be an animal than to be a man making no effort to attain knowledge, for as already stated the animals have no sins and have no need to expiate them. The ancients have said: "This boat of a body has been purchased at a very heavy price of acquired merit. Before it becomes unfit for service, use it well and cross over to the other shore of the ocean of sorrow." "Who can be a worse fool than he who having obtained this human body so difficult to obtain and being born also as a male is still idle and neglects his own good?" We see from passages like these that the other shore of phenomenal life is really *Brahman* itself. The temporary happiness and relief from misery which we seek after and occasionally have are common to us and the animals. If these were the highest benefits to be sought after, we have no claim to be any better than the animals. Our great Master, Śrī Śaṁkarācārya, has said: "When sound or other object comes into contact with the ear or other sense, even beasts like a cow turn away from them if they are perceived to be harmful and approach them if they are perceived to be agreeable. A cow that sees a man holding a stick in his hand knows that he is likely to beat her and runs away from him. If, however, she sees a man with a handful of fresh grass, she goes near him. Similarly the most learned among men keep away at a great distance from those whom they know to be strong and cruel and approach others who are the reverse of them." He has thus characterized people who have not attained to the realization of the Self as on the same footing as the animals.

4. *Importance of Human Birth*

Human beings are no doubt extolled among living beings:

> "Of beings that exist, those that perceptibly breathe are the best. Of the beings that breathe, those that live by their intelligence are the best. Of those that live by their intelligence, human beings are the best.

Among human beings, the Brāhmaṇas are considered the best. Among the Brāhmaṇas, the learned are the best. And among the learned, those that have firm knowledge (of the Self) are the best."

If therefore the only benefits that we get are the pleasures and freedom from pain shared by the animals, how can we justify the superiority mentioned above? Even the capacity to live by one's intelligence is not a distinguishing factor of man. If we attribute the superiority of man to his ability, for example, to subordinate to his will the elephant and other animals far bigger and stronger than himself by his brain-power, we must consider this taming of others, when he is unable to tame his own mind, only as on a par with pouring an oblation into the ashes, for such a capacity is of no spiritual benefit to him. The capacity thus to tame the animals is, as a matter of fact, more present and patent in people who are not Brāhmaṇas. How can any superiority be ascribed to Brāhmaṇas on this score?

The above statements are based really on the capacity to understand aright the teachings of the Śāstras, to carry out properly the injunctions laid down therein, to eschew all activities prohibited thereby, to attain a particular object conceived of as the means to happiness and even to put an end to all misery whatsoever—such capacity is given to man alone. As such Śāstras are available to the Brāhmaṇas, they are rightly considered superior to other men. As stated already, if one is born as a man but neglects what is ordained for him by the Śāstras and further does what is prohibited therein, a cow, which has no capacity for responsible action, is decidedly superior to him. The cow incurs no sin and has no expiation to undergo. As once before stated, injunctions positive and negative are only for human beings. They are not for the animals. The State officers punish only erring men and not wicked animals. Further, the object of punishing one is to make him get rid of his faults. The animals have no ability to free themselves from their faults, however much they may be punished. The Śāstras do not certainly prescribe any purificatory ceremonies for tigers and other wild animals which kill cows and even Brāhmaṇas. We have therefore to conclude that the injunctions and prohibitions in the Śāstras are intended generally only for human beings.

CHAPTER VII

THE SEARCH FOR HAPPINESS

1. The Causes of Pain and Pleasure

It has been stated that it is the Śāstras that tell us what is good and what is not, and that it is the Śāstras that regulate our activities. But, as every living being is by nature ever active in the pursuit of good and in the avoidance of evil, it would seem that the Śāstras claiming to teach us the same things are unnecessary. If really we can know by ourselves what is good and what is evil and if we are able by our own actions to secure the one and avoid the other, there would have been no necessity at all for any Śāstra. But it is learnt by experience that it is ordinarily not possible to have in this world even the slightest pleasure in the manner we should like to have it. While so, how can man by the exercise of his unaided intellect find out the means of attaining happiness in other regions of experience or pursue those means successfully in the absence of the Śāstras preserved by our ancients as prescribing what is good and what is not?

If we think over this matter a little, we can easily see from our own worldly experiences that we cannot by the use of our mere intellect secure the happiness wanted or escape the misery sought to be avoided. It has been said by great people that in all the three worlds everybody exerts himself only for the sake of happiness and nobody makes the slightest effort to attain misery. If a person is thus ever active in the pursuit of pleasure and in the avoidance of pain, does it not seem a logical conclusion that he must ever be happy? But our experience is otherwise. We have, therefore, to seek some reason for this phenomenon.

To say that the right means to secure an object were adopted, but that the object was not obtained, is on the face of it self-contradictory. It is no doubt true that man by his efforts sometimes obtains some pleasure and at other times avoids some pain; but his object is to have happiness always and his activities are intended to produce only that effect. How can his longing to be ever happy be allayed by obtaining some pleasure occasionally? When he is ever making efforts to secure that lasting happiness, why does he get only occasionally some bits of happiness? Is it reasonable to say that such evanescent pleasure is the appropriate effect of his determined and constant efforts? Can we at least say that such a pleasure is really the result of any effort made now? It is seen in the world that a particular kind of effort leading to a particular result at one time does not necessarily lead to the same result if adopted at other times. It may happen that instead of happiness it may lead to misery. A trader begins a trade and without much experience in it easily gets a large profit. The same person after gaining much experience in the course of years and in pursuing the same trade lands himself in loss at another time. If the trade by itself were the cause of his income, how does it happen that he prospers in the beginning and suffers later on?

It is said: "People plough the lands in the same manner. People follow the Śāstras in the same manner. But, due to the influence of an unseen Power, some rise up and others sink down." It is, therefore, impossible for us to know without the aid of the Śāstras the means for securing happiness or avoiding misery. Nobody who has not followed the Śāstras has ever succeeded in enunciating to the world the means of attaining happiness or escaping misery by the aid of his mere intellect. If he had so succeeded, everybody would be happy by adopting those means and there would be no occasion for any misery at any time. It is seen from this also that the means of happiness or misery must be learnt only from the Śāstras and our unaided intellect cannot help us in the matter.

2. *The Bliss of the Self*

The means of knowledge known as Direct Perception, Inferential Reasoning and the Authority of the lay Word are common to all people. If it is possible to ascertain the cause of pleasure and pain with the help of these means of knowledge, such ascertainment will be very easy as there are many persons who are very proficient in such means of knowledge. Their conclusions are only to the effect that happiness is to be had through Sound, Touch, Form, Taste and Smell. But these need some investigation. Do all these five jointly contribute to happiness or is each one of them competent to lead to happiness? The former alternative is not acceptable: for we experience pleasure even if one of those factors is present. Further the senses grasping them can function only one after another and not simultaneously. It is not, therefore, possible to say that all the five conjointly produce happiness. Nor is it possible to say that each of them individually gives us pleasure; for we see that the very same sensuous experience which gives pleasure to a person at one time is not only unable to give that pleasure when he is stricken down with grief but becomes even an object of disgust. A person whose mind is torn by anxiety cannot enjoy the music of the Vīṇā; in fact, it will be even distasteful to him at that time. We see that in the state of sound sleep there is a complete absence of all those things which we ordinarily consider as the means of happiness and yet there is an experience of happiness unalloyed with any pain. It seems, therefore, that none of those things either individually or conjointly with others is really the cause of happiness.

That alone is entitled to the name of a cause which invariably precedes the birth of an effect and without which the effect is never produced. When we are stricken with grief at being separated from some beloved object, there is no happiness even though music and other "means of happiness" do exist. We see also that, even in the absence of such "means," we have the experience of supreme happiness during deep sleep and spiritual trance. How, then, can we postulate any causal nature in such "means" with reference to happiness? The happiness experienced in the sleep of ignorance itself is beyond compare and is free from any tinge of pain. "But for this unalloyed happiness who can be active and who can even live?" So says the Śruti pointing out the superiority of the happiness of sleep to sensuous pleasure. It is well known and within the experience of all that people seek the happiness of sleep deliberately discarding all objects considered the means of happiness. Do we not see that, if a man enjoying the bliss of sleep is disturbed by somebody ever so dear to him, his first impulse is one of resentment at the disturbance? We can easily learn from this that happiness had without reference to any object of the senses is really the best.

Though during deep sleep happiness is had without reference to any object of the senses, the Śāstras declare that such happiness is mixed with ignorance. If the happiness thus mixed with ignorance but had without reference to any object of the senses is itself far superior to the happiness that can be had through the objects of the senses, is it at all necessary to point out that the happiness of the Self had during the period of spiritual trance, when the veil of ignorance is removed by the realization of the Self, is unlimited and far above all other happiness? When the light of the sun screened by the clouds is able to enlighten for us more things than the shining moon can, what shall we say of the light of the sun unscreened by any cloud? Our innate nature is happiness itself and we ever have it with us. But we do not realize it. On the other hand, we begin to seek for it elsewhere in the objective world outside us, just as a person who is ignorant of a treasure buried in his own house goes about begging. The world fascinates us only because of this ignorance. There is no doubt about it.

3. *Sensuous Pleasure is no Happiness*

Besides what has been stated above there are other considerations also from which we can clearly see that sensuous objects are not the causes of happiness. The word for "object" is "Viṣaya" in Saṁskrit. Its primary root meaning is: "That which binds well." It is in this view that Śrī Śaṁkarācārya said in his *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*:

शब्दादिभिः पञ्चभिरेव पञ्च पञ्चत्वमापुः स्वगुणेन वद्धाः ।
कुरङ्गमातङ्गपतङ्गमीनभृङ्गा नरः पञ्चभिरञ्चितः किम् ॥

The deer deceived by the sound of music hastens to its doom; the elephant decoyed by the sense of touch becomes captive; the moth lured by the colour of the flame rushes to its death; the fish misled by the sense of taste gets caught; and the bee enchanted by the smell of a flower is caught up within it. These are all deceived but only by a particular sensuous object. Man is deceived by all the five senses and their corresponding objects. Need it be said that he gets easily caught? He does not properly consider the nature of things and he is misled into mistaking what are really the causes of misery as the causes of happiness and he makes tremendous efforts to secure them. He does not exert himself to learn what are the true means of happiness and to secure them. On the other hand, the ordinary man does not care to know what true happiness is but longs for sensuous objects, thinks that the securing of these objects is itself happiness and engages himself in the effort to secure them. Bhartṛhari has well said:

तृषा शुष्यत्यास्ये पिबति सळिळं शीतमधुरं
क्षुधार्तः शाल्यन्नं कवळयति सूपादिकळितम् ।
प्रदीप्ते कामाग्नौ सुदृढतरमाळिङ्गति वधूं
प्रतीकारं व्याधेः सुखमिति विपर्यस्यति जनः ॥

"A man with a tongue parched by thirst drinks cool and sweet water. A man suffering from hunger eats food with boiled pulses and other accessories. A man subject to the fever of love embraces tightly his beloved. These are all thus in the nature of remedies for the respective diseases and yet people mistake them for happiness."

If the drinking of cool and sweet water and the other activities are themselves competent to give happiness, it stands to reason that, inasmuch as we want happiness always, we must be prepared to be drinking such water always or always engaging ourselves in any of the other activities; for it is the essence of happiness that we can never have enough of it. That is, no man says: "I have had enough of happiness. I do not want it any more." If happiness is the result of drinking water, we must go on drinking water for ever. Firstly, this is physically impossible and secondly, if we attempt any such thing, our bodily system will be easily dislocated and become diseased. Can a means of happiness really lead to such a result? It is well known that engaging more and more in concentration on God and other like activities leads to a deeper and deeper sense of peace and happiness. Similarly the pursuit of sensuous pleasure more and more intensely must lead to more and more happiness; but we see, on the other hand, that it invariably leads to pain and misery. Why is it so? Those who enunciate the proposition that sensuous objects are the causes of happiness cannot possibly answer this question and their inability to do so is itself proof against the truth of their proposition.

4. *The Means of Happiness*

It is a well-known fact that those who ever dwell in the Self never allow their minds to stray towards sensuous objects. We have to learn from this and the several examples given in the Vedas that the bliss of the Self alone is real happiness. It is equally obvious that the blissful Self cannot be realized till the ignorance which is veiling it is removed and that our efforts, therefore, should be directed towards removing this veil of ignorance. It is the primary duty of man to make such efforts. It is only logical to say that ignorance can never be dispelled by anything other than Knowledge. But the knowledge or consciousness that we are all having of ourselves is too vague and general to get rid of that ignorance. Even the theoretical knowledge of the Self which the learned people get from a study of the Śāstras is incompetent to do so and is no more efficient in this particular than the knowledge possessed by the animals. The only knowledge capable of eradicating the ignorance of the Self is the direct realization of the Ever-Existent, Ever-Conscious and Ever-Free *Brahman*, the One without a second, and not distinct from our inmost Self. The Vedas proclaim this in hundreds of texts like:

त्वमेव विदित्वातिमृत्युमेति ।

" One transcends death by knowing Him alone."

How are we to obtain such a Knowledge? The Veda with a motherly love tells us that it is to be had through Śravaṇa (hearing), Manana (cogitation) and Nididhyāsana (contemplation). It says:

संन्यस्य श्रवणं कुर्यात् ।

" Engage yourself in hearing after renouncing."

It is seen therefrom that the stage of hearing is after renunciation. When is one to renounce? The Veda says:

यदहरेव विरजेत् तदहरेव प्रव्रजेत् ।

> " One should renounce on the very day when he gets detachment."

Thus the proper time for Sannyāsa is when one gives up all attachment. The Sannyāsa taken up for the purpose of hearing is known, therefore, as Vividiṣā-Sannyāsa or renunciation in consequence of a desire to know. This desire to know will arise only if the duties prescribed by the Śāstras are punctiliously performed in a spirit of absolute dedication to God, and this is pointed out in the Vedic passage:

त्वमेतं ब्राह्मणा विविदिषन्ति यज्ञेन दानेन तपसानाशकेन ।

> " The Brāhmaṇas desire to know Him through sacrificial rites, gifts and penances without attachment."

The man who is very hungry does not seek anything else but food and in such seeking for food he does not brook any delay. Similarly, that aspirant alone who turns aside from all activities leading to birth and death and is keen about securing without delay the means like hearing for the attainment of knowledge can be really said to have the desire to know. Only he who has such a strong desire to know is competent to take up Sannyāsa as a preliminary step towards the spiritual quest leading to true knowledge. Such a desire will not arise in anybody unless his aversion to sensuous objects, seen or heard of, is firm and unshakable. Such an aversion is possible only to a person whose mind is pure and can see the objects in their real light. The mind becomes pure by the eradication of the sins clouding it. The eradication of sins and the purity of the mind are to be had only through the performance of activities enjoined by the Śāstras with a spirit of dedication to the Lord. These truths are laid down in passages like:

धर्मेण पापमपनुदति ।

" One discards sin by Dharma."

योगिनः कर्म कुर्वन्ति सङ्गं त्यक्त्वाऽऽत्मशुद्धये ।

" Those who are conversant with the means perform activities, giving up attachment, for the purification of the mind."

We see from these passages of the Veda and Smṛti that Dharma has the capacity to counteract sin. He alone will be competent to enquire into the truth of things, whose mind is unclouded by sin. If the mind becomes pure by the eradication of sin, he will begin to enquire properly and easily attain a sense of detachment from all ephemeral objects of enjoyment from the physical body to the highest Brahmaloka.

5. *Our Duty to Strive*

It is seen, therefore, that it is on man alone that the Śāstras enjoin activities and that it is for him to perform them properly as prescribed by the Śāstras, to get his mind purified by such performance, to acquire an attitude of non-attachment to all sensuous objects as the result of such purity of mind, to take up Sannyāsa consequent upon such detachment, to long acutely and solely for the enquiry into the nature of the Self thereupon, to enter upon the courses of hearing, cogitation and contemplation as steps to the realization of the Self, to realize the Self as clearly as an apple in the open palm of one's own hand, to dispel thereby the veil of ignorance and abide for evermore in the bliss of the Self. The animals, who have no sense of right or wrong, and the celestial beings, who are immersed in the enjoyment of sensuous pleasures and cannot, therefore, have detachment, are both disqualified for any Vedic activities. They cannot, therefore, reach the bliss of the Self by resorting to the steps mentioned above as leading to the same. This is why the Śāstras extol the human birth. Even among human beings there are various grades and even the lowest among them can by devotion to those above them and to God will get higher and higher births and finally get all the ingredients necessary for the attainment of Knowledge, so that they also reach the goal of Self-Realization.

From what has been stated above, it is seen that the cause of pain and misery is embodiment, that embodiment is the result of activities, that action is induced by love or hate, that love or hate results from a mistaken sense of agreeableness or disagreeableness in particular objects, that such a mistaken sense is the fruit of the sense of duality, that the sense of duality is caused by the ignorance of the Self, which is ever One without a second, that such ignorance can be dispelled only by the dawn of the Knowledge of the Self, that as a consequence thereof all the intervening misconception disappears automatically, and that pain and misery cease to be. It is clear, therefore, that it is only the realization of the Self that can free us from pain and misery altogether and for ever. The region where such a realization can be had is either this earth or the Brahmaloka. The latter is very difficult to reach as it is attainable only by special and difficult courses of action and devotion. We must, therefore, exert ourselves even here to attain that Knowledge. The Vedas inform us that the Svarga and other regions inhabited by Gandharvas and other celestial beings are unfit for the acquisition of Self-Knowledge. If we leave this human embodiment and get embodied hereafter as animals and lack even ordinary knowledge, what room is there for any attempt at securing the supreme Knowledge? It has been authoritatively stated that, if a person having a human embodiment does not utilize it for the attainment of true Knowledge and dies, *Brahman* becomes still more far away from him.

Leave alone the securing of everlasting happiness, even the evanescent pleasures which we mistake for happiness cannot be obtained without Dharma. Have we not often heard the remark: "So and so has all the things necessary in this world for happiness. But he has not the good fortune to enjoy them!" It is clear from this that even for worldly pleasures an element which is called fortune but is really the good result of past actions prescribed in the Śāstras is quite necessary. That is why a person does not get what he wants, however much he may try for it to the best of his intelligence. The Śāstras, concerned as they are with the welfare of even those who have worldly desires, enunciate the activities which will lead to the getting of worldly possessions like sons, wives and wealth. If a man can by himself determine the nature of such activities, why should the Veda take the trouble of enunciating them? In fact, as already stated, the very definition of Veda is that which teaches those means which cannot be ascertained by direct perception or by inference.

Happiness, therefore, whether of this world or known to the Śāstras, is clearly seen to be unattainable except through Dharma. We must realize this and take refuge in the Śāstras. We must perform punctiliously the activities prescribed there for us. We can then get the happiness desired. If we avoid the activities prohibited by the Śāstras, we can avoid the consequent misery.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PURIFICATION OF THE MIND

1. Mistaken Perception

THOUGH the Lord, the supreme fountain of limitless mercy, has clearly pointed out to us in the Vedas and through the Gurus the means to attain good in several ways, yet we do not care to pursue those means. We shall consider a little the reason for this. Though all living beings long for the getting of good and desire not the evil, the good longed for is rarely obtained and the evil not desired is incessantly happening. We have said already that if the means are properly pursued the result must necessarily ensue. But we see often that a kind of activity pursued for the attainment of a particular object does not sometimes lead to the result expected. It is seen therefore that, even for the enjoined actions yielding the promised result, it is necessary to get rid of the impediments which stand in the way of their bearing fruit. That is why many a person who engages himself in the study of the Vedānta does not attain knowledge. Though study, cogitation, etc., are certainly the means of knowledge, no knowledge can actually dawn if the several defects which are impediments to the arising of knowledge are still present in the mind. On the other hand, those whose minds are pure and free from such defects engage themselves successfully in study, cogitation, etc., known collectively as Nivṛtti Dharma and attain knowledge and reach the Supreme Good known as Freedom from Bondage. Those whose minds are not yet pure resort to the performance of good deeds enjoined by the Śāstras and collectively known as Pravṛtti Dharma and attain relative good and also purification of mind. If, however, the mind is obsessed by the desire for the fruits when performing the enjoined duties, the taste for such fruits only gets more intense and there is no chance for the mind getting pure. Just as a stream cannot possibly dry up if the floods are coming on, there can be no end to phenomenal life if activities which maintain and intensify it are always persisted in.

The Self transcends space and, as activity implies some motion in space, it is really impossible to postulate any activity of the Self. Activity can be seen only in an object which is limited in space and it cannot be an attribute of an entity which is beyond and encompasses all space. As air occupies only a portion of space, there can be movement in air but the spatial element, covering as it does all space, is incapable of any motion. Water in a pot full of water does not move but, if the pot is not so full, there can be wave motions in the water. We can see from these examples that no movement is possible in an entity which is full. As the Self pervades the entire universe, there can possibly be no activity in the Self. It may be asked: If it is so, how does it happen that the Self is seen as related to activity and subjected to phenomenal imperfect life? The Great Master answers this question in his *Viveka-cūḍāmaṇi* thus:

अज्ञानयोगात् परमात्मनस्तव ह्यनात्मबन्धस्तत एव संसृतिः ।
तयोर्विवेकोदितबोधवह्निरज्ञानकार्यं प्रदहेत् समूलम् ॥

"You are the Supreme Self, but you have got into the bondage with non-Self out of ignorance and are therefore bound. If the fire of knowledge caused by realizing the distinction between the Self and the non-Self is generated, it will burn away all the effects of ignorance along with their root cause "ignorance'."

The very same Self that is said to be the cause of Ākāśa and its derivative is mentioned as the Annarasamaya (made of the essence of food). This only means that the Self, supreme as he really is, mistakenly identifies himself with the body and other lower things. It may be asked, is it possible for a really higher being to identify himself with a lower entity? But have we not heard of the Emperor Nala becoming, by the dictates of fate, Bāhuka, the charioteer? Similarly, the Self identifies himself with the non-Self and thinks himself inert and so on. Similarly also, the body and other things which are really non-Self are taken as possessing the characteristic of consciousness and so on. Both are mistaken conceptions.

Of these two kinds of mistake, the mistake of taking the Self to be non-Self may not really be dangerous, but to take the non-Self as the Self and to attribute to the latter all the pain and pleasure that are really appurtenant to the former is certainly very dangerous. If one mistakes a rope for a snake, he may be afraid and his limbs begin to tremble but nothing worse will happen. If, however, he mistakes a snake for a rope and attempts to pick it up, it will certainly bite him and he may die in consequence. The Master therefore emphasizes on the greater need to free ourselves from the sense of the Self in the non-Self.

अतस्मिंस्तद्बुद्धिः प्रभवति विमूढस्य तमसा
विवेकाभावाद्वै स्फुरति भुजगे रज्जुधिषणा ।
ततोऽनर्थव्रातो निपतति समादातुरधिक-
स्ततो योऽसद्ग्राहः स हि भवति बन्धः शृणु सखे ॥

There is only one way of getting rid of this mistaken identification. As it is the result of the want of realization of the true nature of the Self, it can be eradicated only by securing that realization. If we want the snake appearing in the rope to disappear, it will not disappear however long we may beat it with sticks. It will not disappear whatever may be the kind of activity we engage ourselves in. It will disappear only if we get the true knowledge that it is but a rope. Similarly, bondage being the result of ignorance can be removed only by knowledge and not by any kind of activity. Will the snake mistakenly seen in a garland cease to be if we resort to any number of prostrations, māntric exorcizings or administrations of medicines or some such thing?

आविद्यो ह्येष बन्धो विरमति न विना वेदनं कर्मजालैः ।
मालोद्भूताहिरस्तं व्रजति किमु नमस्कारमन्त्रौषधाद्यैः ।

Ignorance therefore can be dispelled only by its opposite, knowledge. Even if any number of Karmas are performed, bondage can never be put an end to in the absence of the arising of knowledge.

2. *The Need for Karma*

The innate laziness of the moderns hearing this statement will at once lead them to conclude that, as no activity is potent to get rid of bondage, the performance of the activities of Dharma enjoined with reference to the Varṇa, Āśrama, etc., of each individual is superfluous and may be dispensed with. But such is not the teaching of the Śāstras. It is only to avoid such hasty conclusions, that the Śāstras prescribe that their teachings are open only to those who are qualified and that they are not to be given to those who will take a random word here and random word there and at once draw hasty conclusions as to the purport of the Śāstras. If such teachings are given to them, they will never grasp aright as they lack the capacity to do so and further they will lose their hold on the lesser ideals for which alone they are competent. The result will be that they will lose both, the higher ideal because they cannot comprehend it and the lower because they have lost faith in it. The Śāstras are emphatic in saying that he who preaches the highest truths to persons who are incompetent to receive them pushes them wantonly into hell.

अज्ञस्यार्धप्रबुद्धस्य सर्वं ब्रह्मेति यो वदेत् ।
महानिरयजालेषु तेनायं हि प्रवेशितः ॥

It is only because of this it is insisted that a Guru is necessary as a practical guide to the earnest aspirant. It is also laid down that the company of the great who have known well the purport of the Śāstras and have realized it in actual experience must be sought after.

When we said that Karma was incompetent to get rid of the mistaken identification, the result of ignorance, and to free us from bondage, we meant only that it could not serve as the immediate means. It is far from our intention to say that it was not even a mediate means. On the other hand, as knowledge requires the necessary condition of a pure mind, the performance of Karma is a necessity to secure such purity of mind. Further, Karma cannot be given up when we like. It is said that it can be given up only in the method prescribed for giving it up.

विधिना कर्मबन्धं विधूय ।

If we are free to give up Karma in any manner, there is no meaning in referring to the Vidhi "Prescription" in this passage. Giving up is the same, whether in the prescribed manner or otherwise; what does it matter how it is done? Such a question is really meaningless. There are rules which prescribe that if a person serves the Government for so many years he will be retired on such and such a pension. If he performs his duties properly during the full period of his service, he will earn the regard of the Government, retire honourably, get his pension and spend the rest of his life happily. No doubt he gives up his post, comes home and sits quiet. If another person in actual service thinks that he can also leave his post and come away home and abandons his duties suddenly without obtaining the permission of the Government and leaves the things as they are, can he ever hope for the good graces of the Government or can he get any pension? On the other hand, he will earn the displeasure of the Government and will be punished for dereliction of duty. The reason is that his giving up of his post is not in the prescribed manner. Similarly, Karma has to be scrupulously performed till the purification of the mind is secured and then only can Karma be given up to enable one to engage himself solely in the pursuit of knowledge. If he gives up Karma earlier, he will be lost both in Karma and in knowledge, will not get the benefit of either and will have earned instead the displeasure of God. Similarly, if the purification of the mind is once properly secured, Karma has to be given up and it is a mistake to stick on to it. It is necessary to prepare the ground for cultivation and for doing so the land has certainly to be ploughed; but once the land is ready for cultivation the plough must necessarily be set aside. It is absurd to carry the plough even at the time of transplantation of seedlings or at the time of the harvest. If one insists upon sticking to Karma even after his mind has become pure, he is no better than the cultivator who is averse to keep the plough aside even when it is no longer desired or necessary.

3. *The Conquest of Desire*

All the Śāstras, other than the one which deals directly with Knowledge, are helpful only in the acquisition of the purity of the mind. To purify the mind is really but to remove the impurities in it. The most important of such impurities is Desire. The ignorance of the true nature of the Self as one of boundless Bliss is beginningless and is known as Avidyā and, due to its influence, we mistakenly think that things outside us are capable of giving happiness to us and we long to get them. This longing is known as Kāma, desire. If we really want the blissful kingdom of the Self, it cannot be had by trying to get into our hands the things that are outside us or by trying to see that nobody else takes away what we have or what we acquire. Any number of external enemies may have been defeated by a person but if he is not able to subdue this internal enemy known as Desire, he can have no claim to have attained Swarājya. This desire poses as a friend of ours but really pushes us into the slough of misery. It makes us do many things which we often do not like to do and reap most undesired fruits. Arjuna asked Śrī Kṛṣṇa:

अथ केन प्रयुक्तोऽयं पापं चरति पूरुषः ।
अनिच्छन्नपि वार्ष्णेय बलादिव नियोजितः ॥

"O Lord, by whom is a person compelled to do evil deeds even against his wishes as if he were made to do so forcibly?"

The Lord answers:

काम एष क्रोध एष रजोगुणसमुद्भवः ।
महाशनो महापाप्मा विद्ध्येनमिह वैरिणम् ॥

"He is Kāma, Desire. He is even Krodha, Anger. He is born of Rajoguṇa. He has an insatiable appetite. He is highly sinful. Know him here as the enemy."

If anything stands in the way of our getting an object desired, the desire takes on the form of anger. Similarly, pride, envy, etc., are all the result of desire and, inasmuch as all these are our enemies, they are known as Ariṣaḍ-varga, the group of six enemies. If we get rid of these enemies and make our minds free from desire, we shall have then secured purity of mind. To secure this purity of mind, the Śāstras have prescribed the performance of enjoined activities without any desire for their fruits.

As the mistaken identification with the body, etc., is bound to persist till the dawn of knowledge, it is not possible to be without any activity till that stage is reached. If the activity is the one prescribed in the Śāstras, we get good. If we perform that again without any desire for its fruit, it leads to a purification of the mind and thereby qualifies us for the path of Knowledge. The Śāstras have accordingly prescribed that, till the mind gets purified, only the desire for the fruit of enjoined activities must be given up and that, after the mind is purified, the activities themselves must be given up.

Many people of these modern days do not care to know this distinction, do not attach any significance to the difference in the competence of each individual; they call every activity by the name of Dharma and begin to proclaim that there need be no distinction of castes, that all should behave in the same manner and that the good of the country depends upon such " equality ". There are many others who repose confidence in the teachers of this school, embark on ways directly prohibited by the Śāstras and make determined efforts to create confusion of castes and bring about the ascendance of Adharma in the world. The Lord has no doubt stated that He will incarnate whenever there is a decline in Dharma and a rise in Adharma. Evidently the promulgators of such teachings are helping in a way but quite unconsciously the early advent of the Lord once again in our midst.

As a matter of fact we see that the ordinary people of the land at present have lost the capacity to distinguish between what is authority and what is not, who are really great and who are not, and even as to who is their real friend and well-wisher and who is not. It is seen from the Purāṇas that the Lord has incarnated before in the previous ages to free the world from the clutches of evil-doers like Hiraṇyakaśipu and Rāvaṇa.

But it must be borne in mind that even they were far more preferable than we can ever claim to be. If they engaged themselves in any controversy, they took their stand on some definite means of Knowledge, be it Direct Perception or Inferential Reasoning or the authority of the Word. More than that, they placed implicit faith in the teachings of the Lord as laid down in the Vedas and with equal faith and stubborn determination pursued the paths of penance prescribed therein and secured the fruits thereof. They no doubt hated God but they certainly accepted His existence as a positive and incontrovertible truth. They obtained very extraordinary powers, thanks to the magnitude of their penances. We, on the other hand, possess only their evil propensities. We have not even a small fraction of their abilities or of their deep faith in the Vedas. We do not have to any extent their earnestness or enthusiasm and we lack miserably their spirit of endeavour. We have not, in short, any good quality that characterized them. The Lord alone must give us proper sense and save us. Not many years ago, the Varṇa and Āśrama Dharma of the land was fairly intact and do we not know that during that period our country far surpassed other countries even in worldly wealth? Did not the King of England, the son's son of Queen Victoria, dine along with Kaiser of Germany, the daughter's son of the same Queen? They belonged to the same group and even to the same family and they could have and did have other relationships by marriage also. Did their relationship, their inter-dining and their inter-marriage stand in the way of their engaging themselves in a terrible war against each other? If we but pause to consider, we will easily realize that the distinction of castes, etc., has really nothing to do with and does not stand in the way of real amity. But who cares to so pause and consider?

We said above that Karma is an aid to the attainment of Knowledge. We are taught poems and dramas in our younger days so that we might get a good knowledge of the Saṁskrit literature. But if anybody thinks that the study of that literature is itself a goal of life and pursues it to the end of his life, we cannot say of him that he has spent his life to any useful purpose. It is in this sense that the prohibition,

काव्यालापांश्च वर्जयेत् ।

"Avoid literature" is meaningful. The rhetoricians have interpreted this prohibition as confined to undesirable literature. The prohibition really is quite general and applies only to a stage when a good grounding has been obtained in that language; after such a stage is reached, there is no meaning in or need for persisting in such studies. Mere knowledge of a language is not enough; one must acquire also the capacity to grasp and understand the things taught and this requires some sharpness of intellect and powers of accurate reasoning. To create in us such a capacity, the science of logic is taught to us. But it is a mistake to think that knowledge of logic is itself an end in life and to spend all our life-period in trying to master the intricacies of that science. We must resort to such kinds of learning only to the extent they are useful and leave them aside as soon as there is no further use for them. Similarly, for the purpose of purifying the mind, the Śāstras mentioned above and the observance, without any tint of desire, of the activities prescribed therein are certainly necessary.

4. *Steady the Mind*

If we wash or wipe off the dust on a mirror, no doubt it becomes pure and capable of reflecting well; but, if it is moving about, it cannot receive a definite or clear image. Similarly, though by the scrupulous performance of desireless action, the impurities of the mind may be eradicated, it is necessary to make it one-pointed to free it from the defect of vacillation. As it has been laid down that even during the time of performing desireless action it must be done with the spirit of dedication to God, it will certainly be easy to have the mind centred upon God Himself. The Science of Yoga or Concentration has this object in view. The means by which the mind is made to concentrate upon God is given the name of Bhakti, Devotion. If thus by the pursuance of desireless action the mind gets free from its impurities and by the pursuance of Devotion it gets free from vacillation, then only can the mind be said to be completely pure. Once such a purity is secured, the mind will have acquired the capacity to understand and realize the nature of the Self the moment it is taught. Thus to secure absolute happiness, the bliss of the Self, Karma (Action), Bhakṭi (Devotion) and Jñāna (Knowledge) are all necessary. There is no other way that can lead us to the goal. The Lord therefore says that He has ordained all these as means of the absolute Good.

योगास्त्रयो मया प्रोक्ता नृणां श्रेयोविधित्सया ।
ज्ञानं कर्म च भक्तिश्च नोपायोऽन्योऽस्ति कुत्रचित् ॥

Everyone therefore must, according to his own competency, pursue these means and reach the goal of Freedom from Bondage and of Bliss Infinite. Such is the intention of the Śāstras.

CHAPTER IX

THE WAY TO HAPPINESS

1. *A Reflected Image*

THE Upaniṣads enunciate the truth that it is the Supreme Self, the Eternal, the Pure and the Ever Free, that appears as the individual soul (Jīvātmā) when related to certain limitations. It gets the name of Jīvātmā when viewed as subordinate to such limitations; and It gets the name of Īśvara, the Lord, when viewed as transcending those limitations. Though space is ever one and continuous, the space limited to a pot is called pot-space and the space outside it is called the great space. Similarly, for practical purposes, the same Self gets the name of Jīvātmā and Īśvara.

This can be understood with reference to a familiar example. When a face is reflected in a mirror, the face gets the name of Bimba and the face reflected gets the name of Reflection (Pratibimba). This distinction is a practical one and endures only as long as there is a mirror to create it. If the mirror is removed, the reflection ceases to be and the Bimba remains only as the face. Even when the reflection is being perceived, it has no independent existence of its own. Its existence is not apart from the existence of the Bimba. Similarly, it is said that the Lord is the Bimba, the soul is the reflection, and the mind is the mirror, the cause of the reflection.

We can draw a very significant lesson out of this illustration. Suppose we want to put a mark on the forehead of the reflected face seen in the mirror. We cannot possibly put our finger through the glass and reach the reflected face. If we attempt any such thing, the glass will be broken and the face in it will disappear altogether. We can, however, put a mark on the glass just opposite to the centre of the forehead of the reflected face and feel somewhat satisfied that we have in a way succeeded. But if we do not stand still and if we make the slightest movement, the reflected face also will move, but the mark on the glass will remain where it was placed. It will now seem to be on the cheek of the reflected face or even outside the face itself. We will realize not only that the mark has not been put on the reflected face but will see it placed in some place where we had no idea of putting it and would not have liked to put it. It would seem, therefore, that inasmuch as it is impossible to place the mark directly on the forehead of the reflected face and inasmuch as it is useless to place it on the mirror, there is no way at all of putting a mark on the forehead of the reflected image.

If, however, we are anxious to achieve this object, we must certainly consider well how to do so. If we are intelligent enough, there is only one way open to us. We must desist from all futile attempts to put the mark directly on the reflected face or on the mirror, but put that mark upon the real face outside the mirror. Once we do so, the mark will appear instantaneously on the face of the reflected image. It will not be possible to wipe off the reflected mark by any effort of ours. It will be realized that there is no other way of putting the mark on the reflected image. Not only this. If we put a mark on the real face, no amount of effort on our part can prevent the mark from appearing on the face of the reflection. It must appear there. If, therefore, we want to decorate a reflected image, we must decorate the real figure and there is no other way. If we decorate the real figure the reflected image will be automatically decorated, even if we do not want it.

2. *Please the Lord*

Generally we all desire to be ever happy and do not want suffering of any sort; and this feeling is ever inherent in us. We do not stop with merely having this feeling, but we are always making efforts to secure such happiness and avoid all trouble. Still we neither get happiness nor escape trouble. Why is it so? We must pause to consider. If we consider the illustration just now given, we shall be able to find out the reason in no time. We who are really of the nature of reflected images long for happiness and adopt the methods of the person who tries to put a mark directly on the reflected face or on the mirror. That is why the mark refuses to fall on the forehead of the reflected face. It is an impossibility to get happiness for ourselves directly; for we are but reflections. If, therefore, we want happiness, there is no other method of getting it than the one mentioned above: that is, we must put the mark upon the figure outside the mirror. That is to say, as the Lord occupies the position of that figure, we must make Him happy. If we make Him happy, the happiness will instantaneously reflect itself in us, the reflected images. Once He is made happy, we or even He cannot possibly prevent our being happy. In spite of our efforts, if any to the contrary, we shall be happy. If we think, however, that we can be happy without making Him happy and make attempts in that direction, we can never succeed. We have, therefore, to learn from this illustration that the only way of getting happiness for ourselves is to please God and that there is no other possible way. If we realize this, we shall at once see that all our efforts should be directed only to secure the pleasure of God and that all efforts to secure happiness for ourselves directly are not only unnecessary but quite futile. It is this teaching that the great Master, Śrī Śaṁkarācārya, has very beautifully taught us in addressing the mind as follows:

त्वत्प्रभुजीवप्रियमिच्छसि चेन्नरहरिपूजां कुरु सततम् ।
प्रतिबिम्बालंकृतिधृतिकुशलो बिम्बालंकृतिमातनुते ॥

"O mind, if you really desire the good of your master, the soul, worship always Narahari, the great

Lord; for a person who is an adept in putting ornaments on a reflected image decorates always only the real figure."

3. *Has the Lord Any Wants?*

But the further question will arise, how are we to make the Lord happy? Ordinarily we make another person happy if we give him something which he likes or if we rid him of anything which gives him pain. Again, if the thing liked is already with that person, he cannot certainly be made happy if we give him the very same thing. It would seem that the thing intended to give happiness to a person must be one not only liked by him but which he has not already with him. The Vedas all in one voice proclaim that the Lord is free from all possible defects, is unpolluted by sin and untouched by affliction. What is this thing which can give Him pain and which we can remove to secure Him pleasure? The same Vedas say that His desires are ever true and ever fulfilled. What is there which He would have from us and which He has not already got with Him? Granting that He has some affliction, is it not impertinence on our part to seek to remove it and have we the capacity to do so? Similarly, supposing that He does lack in a particular thing which He would like to have, is it not again sheer impertinence on our part to attempt to supply Him with that thing? And have we the capacity to do so? What thing can we possibly give Him to make Him happy?

As, by His very definition, He is the Lord of the entire universe, what can there be which He has not?

Take, for example, the great Lord in His aspect as Parameśvara, the Consort of Umā. If we think of making Him happy by offering Him all the gold in our possession, we are reminded that, for the extermination of the demon Tripura, He bent the golden mountain Meru itself and held it in His hand as His bow. How insignificant is the gold which we can possibly offer Him? Does He want it from us? And can we please Him by giving it to Him? It may be that He has His bow in gold. Shall we offer Him silver? The very mountain on which He has His abode, *viz.*, the Kailāsa, is made of silver. Kubera, the Lord of the nine treasures, is an intimate friend and servant of His and is ever nearby. It is said that, at the time of the churning of the milk-ocean for nectar, Indra, the Lord of the Devas, appropriated to himself the Kalpaka tree, the cow Kāmadhenu and the stone Cintāmaṇi. But even he is but a part of the eight-aspected (Aṣṭa-Mūrti) Lord and it was the latter who saved all the Devas from perishing under the venomous flames of the Hālāhala poison. Can we say in His abode that there is only one Kalpaka tree or that there is only one Kāmadhenu or only one Cintāmaṇi with Him? They will be found there numberless. If we but have a single Kalpaka tree or one Kāmadhenu or one Cintāmaṇi, we can get whatever we desire. It is not only that all the three are with Him, but they are there in countless numbers. Can He ever want anything? If He does want anything is it for us, the worst of paupers, to attempt to give Him that thing and make Him happy? It may be that a person has every means of happiness available to him in abundance and is yet unhappy, as he lacks coolness of mind. Shall we, then, do something by which we can make the Lord's mind cool? The cool-rayed moon is the Deity presiding over all minds and the Lord has that moon ever on His head. Further, all the good which the inhabitants of the universe long for is dependent upon the service of His holy feet; how, then, can we ever arrogate to ourselves the capacity to do Him good? As, by His very nature, He is the embodiment of all good, He bears the significant name of *Śiva*, the Good. It is mere foolishness to think of giving Him some good and of thereby making Him pleased. If we bear all these facts in our minds, it would seem an impossible task to find out something by giving which we can please Him and which is not already with Him and more so to secure for ourselves, the reflected images, any happiness by pleasing Him. If we stop with this, we can never by any means secure the pleasure of God. That means that we can never be happy. The matter, therefore, requires further consideration.

4. *Surrender the Mind to the Lord*

We must earnestly search for something which the Lord has not with Him, which is dear to Him and which He longs to have. It must be a thing, again, which is available with us and which we can give to

Him. Unless we give Him such a thing, there is no way of getting any happiness for us and we have necessarily, therefore, to find it out anyhow. Nobody need despair that such a thing is an impossibility. The great Master in his boundless grace has pointed out to us such a thing. It is no other than our own mind.

करस्थे हेमाद्रौ गिरिश निकटस्थे धनपतौ
गृहस्थे स्वर्भूजामरसुरभिचिन्तामणिगणे ।
शिरःस्थे शीतांशौ चरणयुगलस्थेऽखिलशुभे
कमर्थं दास्येऽहं भवतु भवदर्थं मम मनः ॥

We know as a matter of direct experience that our mind is *not* with the Lord. If it were with Him, we could never have the slightest suffering and, as we do have affliction of various kinds, we can also easily see by inferential reasoning that our mind is not with Him. The Lord in His infinite mercy is ever anxious that we must offer our mind to Him and is very eagerly awaiting our doing so. If, therefore, we do offer our mind to Him, it is clear that He will be immensely pleased. Our mind, therefore, is something which is dear to Him, which He has not with Him, and which He longs to have. If we give it to Him, there can be no doubt that He will be made happy and that, as a consequence, happiness will be reflected in us also.

Further, a thing may be dear to a person; but, if he is able to obtain it very easily, he may not care for it much. Similarly, if he can get it in abundant quantities, then also his happiness at getting it will not be very keen. If a man is confident that whenever he wants money he can easily get it from a friend living close by, he will not be anxious about it though he may certainly want it. Similarly, if there is a large number of friends to oblige him with money whenever wanted, his happiness will certainly be less keen. Suppose, however, a beggar realizes that nobody in the world is prepared to help him and that, even if anybody chooses to help him, he is a rare phenomenon endowed with extraordinary generosity, and suppose that quite unexpectedly some person gives him something, there cannot be the slightest doubt that the beggar will be immensely pleased. Similarly, from time without beginning the Lord has been insistently begging every one of us in this vast universe to give Him our mind; but nobody is prepared to do so. If, as the result of the fruition of past good deeds, some individual is prepared to respond to His call and place his mind at His feet, need it be said that the joy of the Lord will know no bounds? In these days, we need not have the slightest expectation that many people would come forward to make such offers and thereby belittle the value of our offer in the eyes of God. As there will be no competition at all in this respect, this seems to be the most appropriate time to make an offering of our mind to Him.

5. *The Opportune Moment*

Let us take the ordinary practical world. As we have in these days a large number of persons who have passed several examinations, it is felt that it is difficult to select persons for appointments and the Government, therefore, think it necessary that more qualifications must be acquired to qualify one for an appointment and that others less qualified will not have the appointment. Some years ago, there were not so many persons who had passed so many examinations. There was a dearth of persons who had an adequate knowledge of the language of the British rulers. Many an appointment which the most qualified are unable to obtain in these days was given to those who had far less qualifications. The only reason for this was that the number of persons seeking employment in those days was considerably less. The Government had to get on with their business somehow. They, therefore, took into their service persons who had not passed any high examinations. Similarly, in the Kṛta, Tretā and Dvāpara Yugas there were many persons who deserved the grace of God. They, therefore, thought that they must deserve that grace in a greater degree than others, and accordingly engaged themselves in special courses of penance, sacrificial rites and so on and thereby earned the pleasure of God to a very great degree. In these days, however, the number of persons who seek the grace of God is very low. If anybody, therefore, seeks it now, and if God were to insist upon a higher standard of qualification to deserve it, nobody would care to come any way nearby. This explains prehaps why the Śāstras prescribe that such and such activities are enough in this age of Kali to secure His grace.

Even when such a low standard has been prescribed, what will be His sorrow if nobody seeks Him, the Fountain of Mercy? If in these days a rare individual chances to seek Him in all earnestness, what will be His joy at that event? This seems, therefore, to be the most appropriate time for deserving the grace of God with the least qualification in us and with the least effort. If we do not avail ourselves of this opportune time, there can be no fool worse than we. It is, therefore, our duty to surrender our mind to God and make Him happy and, in consequence, make ourselves happy. There is no other way but this. The Lord is ever ready to accept our surrender and endow us with everything good longed after by us, be it happiness of a qualified or limited nature or the Bliss Absolute of the Self.

CHAPTER X

DEVOTION

1. The Three Stages

ŚRĪ MADHUSŪDANA SARASVATI has classified Bhakti, Devotion or Surrender to the Lord, under three grades:

तस्यैवाहं ममैवासौ स एवाहम्-इति त्रिधा ॥

(1) I belong to the Lord.
(2) The Lord belongs to me.
(3) The Lord is verily myself.

The nearer we approach the Lord, the higher becomes our approximation to Him and hence these three degrees in order. A boy living in his father's house obediently carries out the dictates of his father. When he grows up and the father notes his good qualities and capacity, he will naturally allow the son to take up the responsibility of carrying on the management of the family affairs and at that stage the son will equally naturally assume that his father will not veto any of his own actions but will approve of them and support them as if they were his own. If the young man gets older still and the father has entire confidence in the capacity of the son to manage the family, the father will gradually cease to take any interest in its affairs and will leave everything in his son's hands so that the son himself will be the virtual head of the family. Have we not come across several instances like this? When the son is in the stage of obedience, he will think, "I belong to my father"; when the son is practically in management but thinks of his father as a distinct entity to be ever remembered as the real head of the family, he will think, "The father belongs to me." When the sense of duality born of even a theoretical distinction in interests is eradicated and the son is invested with the full powers of the head of the family, he will be justified in thinking, "The father is myself." If we transfer these attitudes to the realm of Devotion to God, the first stage of obedience to God gets the name of Karmayoga, the Path of Action, the second stage of familiarity with God the name of Bhaktiyoga, the Path of Devotion, and the third stage of non-difference with God the name of Jñānayoga, the Path of Knowledge. Such is the purport of the Śāstras.

In the stage we are at present situated, we cannot claim any competency to say that God belongs to us, much less to say that He is ourselves. If, therefore, we want to enter the way of approach to God, we can at the most attempt to place our step on the initial stages of the first stage of Action in obedience to God and there is no use at all in aiming at the higher stages.

It is this first stage that is referred to by Śrī Śaṁkarācārya in the stanza:

सत्यपि भेदापगमे नाथ तवाहं न मामकीनस्त्वम् ।
सामुद्रो हि तरङ्गः क्वचन समुद्रो न तारङ्गः ॥

> "Even when there is no distinction between us, O Lord, *I* am Yours and not *You* mine, for the wave is of the ocean and the ocean is never of the wave."

It can be said of the soul that it is a part of the Lord but in no way can it be postulated of Him that He is a part of the soul. It may be said generally that the effect is not different from the cause but it can never be said that the cause is not different from the effect. Śrī Vyāsa in his *Brahma-Sūtras* has enunciated that the universe is not distinct from *Brahman* but has not enunciated the reverse proposition that *Brahman* is not distinct from the universe. The cause is always more comprehensive and pervades all its effects. The effect is always limited and does not pervade the cause or the other effects of that cause. The effect cannot exist without cause but cause can certainly exist without the effect. Similarly with God and the soul.

Really speaking, the distinction between the soul and the Lord is not due to any inherent difference in their natures but only due to the attributes which seem to have attached themselves to them. Such attributes responsible for the sense of distinction are known as Upādhis. The soul is described as having for his upādhī impure Sattva and the Lord is described as having for His Upādhī, Pure Sattva. If the means prescribed in the Śāstras are properly pursued and the impurities of the upādhī of the soul are eradicated, the same upādhī becomes pure Sattva. Avidyā itself turns into Māyā. There is, therefore, nothing wrong in saying that the soul free from all impurities is verily the Lord Himself. But, situated as we are, how can we recognize or realize such an identity when we are equating the soul with even the grossest encasements like the body and the mind and think of them as ourselves or as belonging to us? When the senses of *I* and *Mine* in the body and other encasements are so firmly rooted in us, even the first stage of realizing that we belong to the Lord is impossible to approach. Only if we begin to learn at least that our bodies, etc., do not really belong to us but belong only to the Lord to be ordered about as He likes, will we be competent to place our foot on the first rung of the ladder of Devotion.

We are ordinarily of the opinion that we are independent and do not depend upon anybody else. A man labours hard to get some money, purchases with it the things necessary for his household and engages a large number of servants to attend to his own needs, but even he has very often to wait if his dinner is not ready. When we are unable to have our will even in such small matters, how can we ever boast of any independence? It is pure illusion to think that we are independent. When we see daily that in spite of our longing to have happiness and to avoid misery and in spite of our various and determined efforts in that direction, we do not have our wishes satisfied, does it not stand to reason that we must come to the only conclusion possible, namely, that we are *not* independent? If we arrive at this stage of concluding that we are not independent, it will necessarily lead us to the further enquiry: On whom are we dependent? This enquiry will tell us that there is some relationship between us and God, that we are not independent but are controlled by Him, that He is the Controller, that He is the Master and we are His servants, that He is the whole and we are His parts, and so on. Our first duty is, therefore, to train ourselves to realize in actual practice this kind of relationship, namely, of subordination to God. It is this that is mentioned as the first stage of "I belong to Him." It is this that is known as Karmayoga.

2. *Three Kinds of Devotion in Action*

When engaging ourselves in action, we must have the thought: "This is the command of the Lord. I am His servant. I am bound to carry out His command. I am, therefore, doing this. I have no concern in the result." Considering the possible variations in this thought, the ancients have considered the devotion at this stage as of three kinds known as Tāmasa, Rājasa and Sāttvika. That devotion which makes one believe in God and place offerings at His feet so that one's own enemies may be destroyed is known as Tāmasa. This is certainly not a commendable sort of devotion. If he means praying to God, why not he pray to Him to make the enemy a friend and well disposed towards himself? If the enemy becomes a friend, he will even help and there will be a distinct gain. Is that not more than enough? If the enemy is desired to be crushed as the result of his prayer, that desire itself sullies the mind. This kind of devotion is considered the lowest and is really contemptible.

If one is devoted to God with a view to selfish ends and gain to oneself, that devotion is Rājasa and is known also as Desireful Devotion. This is a very dangerous path. If there is the slightest non-compliance with any of the details prescribed by the Śāstras, the desired fruit cannot be had. The restrictions are various and numerous. If there happens to be any mistake anywhere, it may lead to quite the contrary effect. It is not, therefore, proper to worship God for having cows, children, wealth or other things of the ordinary world. Even the performance of the sacrificial rites like Jyotiṣṭoma with the desire to attain the happiness of the celestial regions will come only under this second class of Rājasa Bhakti. Even if we get the fruits which we desire, how long will they last? Have they any long lease of life? They are bound to disappear sooner or later. We shall have to be repeatedly praying to God for them. Suppose we do not fight shy of such shameless begging. Have we ever drawn up an exhaustive list of what all we desire to have? Have we ever drawn up an exhaustive list of what all dangers we desire to avoid? Is it possible to prepare such lists from which we can make a selection on occasions?

We must, therefore, content ourselves with some other method by which we can generally obtain what is good and avoid what is bad. This is the method of Sāttvika Bhakti. The Lord who is pleased with the Sāttvika Bhakti of the devotee is prepared to show him grace in all matters. A person entering the service of the king may be asked what he wants. If he mentions that he wants such and such a thing or a particular sum of money, he may no doubt get it; but, if he simply answers that he wants only the grace of the king, he will get whatever he requires. Service without a stipulated salary is really the more profitable. If the salaried servant makes any mistake, he will be fined; so will be the devotee engaging himself in Rājasa Bhakti. There will be no such trouble or restriction in the case of the servant who wants but the grace of the king. The king will be pleased with whatever service that servant gives. If similarly any devotee serves the Lord without any desire or any eye to profit, he will have no trouble and can ever feel easy. If such a servant who does not expect any remuneration but is still bent upon serving the king happens for some reason or other not to come to the palace, the king will at once depute somebody to ascertain the inconvenience which has prevented the servant from coming to the palace. If he happens to be unwell, the king will send a royal physician to attend to him and cure him. If we, therefore, with selfless devotion worship God according to the method of Sāttvika Bhakti and do not expect any return from Him for our services, we can never be in any want.

He takes up the responsibility of attending to all our conveniences. Even if we do not want, He will be ever bent upon our good. The Lord has definitely promised, in His own words as recorded in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, that He will secure and safeguard all that is good in the case of those who centre their minds upon Him thinking of nothing else and worship Him without intermittance:

अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तो मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते ।
तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् ॥

Even an ordinary king of this world attends to the daily needs of his devoted servant, helps him on special occasions of marriage, etc., in his family and generally gives him all the support that he needs. What cannot one obtain by serving the very Lord of the universe? Desireless Devotion, therefore, that is, Devotion without any expectation of any return and without any selfish taint, is certainly the highest kind of Devotion.

3. *Selfless Service for the Lord*

There is a great difference between Rājasa Bhakti and Sāttvika Bhakti even at the time of performing the act of worship. In Rājasa Bhakti, there will be restlessness and haste and no peace of mind. The Śāstras may say that going round the sacred Aśwattha tree in the prescribed manner will help barren women bear children, but will it be proper for a woman to feel her abdomen, after going round the tree once, to see if she has become pregnant? The result will appear only in course of time. There is no use in our trying to hasten it. Those who are engaged in Rājasa Bhakti will want their expected fruits immediately and will forget that their worship has to be done carefully and without mental unrest. By not getting the fruits immediately, they will often lapse into lack of faith. They will not have the patience to perform the activities with the care and exactness required of them by the Śāstras. If any mantras are taught to them, they will not repeat them with one-pointedness of mind. They will, however, begin to say: "I have been repeating the mantra for the last eight days and yet I have not got the promised result." Their mind will be straying away while they are mechanically repeating the mantra. How can then any result ensue? They will, however, throw the blame on the mantra and say that it is useless. The Śāstras say that that japa which is done by one whose mind is not focussed is useless:

व्यग्रचित्तेन यज्जप्तं तज्जपं निष्फलं भवेत् ।

If those who resort to Rājasa Bhakti consider well this fact, they can easily realize that the fault is really theirs and not of the Śāstras.

In Sāttvika Bhakti, no effort is ever wasted. Every smallest thing is done out of pure disinterested devotion. No part of it therefore is ever a waste. Even if some error creeps in accidentally, it will not mar the merit of the action. The Lord says in the *Gītā*:

नेहाभिक्रमनाशोऽस्ति प्रत्यवायो न विद्यते ।
स्वल्पमप्यस्य धर्मस्य त्रायते महतो भयात् ॥

"In this method, nothing begun is ever lost and there is no chance of any evil consequences, even a very small fraction of this Dharma saves one from a great fear."

We must therefore not ask of God anything except His grace; and Sāttvika Bhakti which connotes such an attitude is decidedly the best. It is the most sensible attitude, everything else is included in it and everything can be obtained by it.

In this context it is necessary to sound a warning which must be carefully borne in mind. If anybody thinks, "Desireless Action in worship of the Lord is far higher than Desireful Action. All the fruits capable of being obtained by the latter are also obtained by the former. I shall therefore worship God desirelessly," his worship will *not* be desireless. If we properly analyse his mentality, he will be found to have more desire than the desireful devotee. If a servant enters into the service of a master thinking, "If I do not stipulate with this master as regards my salary, he will provide for my conveniences far more than what he will do if I stipulate. I shall not therefore enter into any stipulation with him," such a servant is certainly more greedy than one who wants a definite salary. Similarly, if one finding that Desireless Action is more profitable than Desireful Action purports to engage himself in the former, it will not be a desireless action at all. On the other hand, he is really dishonest as he expects to cheat God by posing as being desireless. All desire, therefore, for any fruit other than the grace of God must be scrupulously eschewed.

To deserve the grace of God, we must be free from sin. Even in our daily religious duties we are asked to say that we are performing them so that all the sins incurred by us may be eradicated and so that we may thereby have the grace of God:

ममोपात्तसमस्तदुरितक्षयद्वारा परमेश्वरप्रीत्यर्थम् ।

What more is there to desire than the destruction of our sins and the obtaining of the grace of God? Why should we ask Him to give us this thing and that thing? It has been recorded in our ancient books that, when God, pleased with several earnest devotees, took form and appeared before them and asked them what they wanted, they only asked that, whatever might be the nature of their birth in the future, they must ever have unwavering devotion to His holy Feet and that they wanted nothing else.

4. *The Best Worship*

Even such a devotion is not for the benefit of God. It is only for us. Our devotion is only intended to secure for us the highest good. God gains nothing by it. In a beautiful stanza in *Śivānandalaharī*, the great Master has addressed God as the Protector of Animals and has asked Him to protect well the cow known as Bhakti:

अमितमुदमृतं मुहुर्दुहन्तीं विमलभवत्पदगोष्ठमावसन्तीम् ।
सदय पशुपते सुपुण्यपाकां मम परिपालय भक्तिधेनुमेकाम् ॥

The cows that we keep in our houses may yield about one or two measures of milk in the mornings and evenings. They can never yield an unlimited quantity. They will yield also only at particular times. We cannot attempt to milk them whenever we want. After all, we can get only milk from them, not anything like the ambrosia of ineffable bliss. The shed where the cows are tied will easily get dirty by the accumulation of dirt and refuse, and if neglected will become even repulsive. The Cow known as Devotion will be yielding, on the other hand, ever and incessantly and in quantities beyond all measure, the nectar known as Bliss. The peg to which it has to be tied is the holy and ever pure Feet of the Lord. An ordinary cow may be available for a price, tens or hundreds of rupees. But this Cow of Devotion cannot be so easily got for money. It can be got only as the result of great merit acquired in the course of several births.

It is hardly necessary to emphasize the fact that only a person who has a very good store of past good deeds to his credit can ever taste the milk of Joy flowing from this cow. If such a rare and invaluable cow is obtained by us, it is foolish to think that we have the capacity to tend and protect it properly. Even the function of tying it up properly to the peg, namely, the holy Feet of God, must be entrusted to a competent cowherd who will take care of it. The cowherd who has to take up this responsibility of seeing that the cow does not stray away from the shed and can properly look after it is God Himself. He gets no benefit by accepting this responsibility. Merciful as He is, He is ever prepared to listen to our prayers and to accept the responsibility of looking after this sacred cow. If, therefore, we give up the sense of *I* and *Mine* and leave all responsibility to the Lord, He will certainly look after our welfare. Such an attitude is the highest sign of Devotion. This is Sāttvika Bhakti. The mind, getting free from impurities by the practice of Desireless Action and getting stable by the practice of desireless Devotion, will have become qualified to receive easily the Knowledge of the Self, and the Self will be reflected therein in all its true glory.

CHAPTER XI

TRUE KNOWLEDGE

1. *Ignorance, the Cause of Bondage*

It has been stated before that the gift of knowledge is the highest of all gifts and that knowledge is the remedy which will eradicate all sorrow and misery. We shall now consider a little the nature of that knowledge. Generally speaking, knowledge can be defined as that which dispels ignorance. But the number of things in the world of which we are ignorant is limitless. There are many newspapers published daily with the professed object of telling us of things and events of which we do not know before. Do we call such literature "knowledge" by reason of the fact that they tell us what we do not know? Strictly speaking, they also are "knowledge" as they do dispel our ignorance in certain matters. But we are not really concerned with such ignorance or with such knowledge. The wise man will seek only such knowledge as is competent to free him from that sort of ignorance which is really injurious to him. We do not ordinarily lose anything by being ignorant of the many things of which we are said to be enlightened by newspapers. Nor do we, as a matter of fact, see that those who get their ignorance of those things dispelled by perusal of newspapers are in any way specially benefited more than others. We must, therefore, bear in mind only that kind of ignorance which is really harmful to us and by the removal of which alone we will be freed from sorrow and pain and can get happiness. Such ignorance is ignorance concerning our Self. It is this ignorance that is called Avidyā. It is this Avidyā that is the cause of all misery. Till we get rid of it, there can be no absolute freedom from misery.

It is said that the ignorance of the Self is itself a very great sin and that it is the root cause of all other sins.

योऽन्यथा सन्तमात्मानमन्यथा प्रतिपद्यते ।
किं तेन न कृतं पापं चौरेणात्मापहारिणा ॥

> "He who thinks of the Self as other than what it really is, is verily a thief who steals even himself; and what sin is there which he has not perpetrated?"

The stanza says: "When a person is prepared to steal even himself, is there any sin which he has not perpetrated?" Theft may be roughly defined as removing an article from one place to another where the owner does not want it to be. The three inherent characteristics of the Self, Existence, Consciousness and Bliss, are its property. To take them from the Self and ascribe them to the body, etc., which are the non-Self and even to think of the latter as the Self itself is certainly theft; and why need we doubt the applicability of the epithet "the thief of the Self" to one who is prepared to do such things? If you catch a thief and ask him if he stole, he will certainly deny and incur the sin of falsehood also. If he knows that somebody else is likely to find him out, he will get angry with him and this anger will develop into hatred and he will be prepared to injure that somebody even to the extent of murdering him, if necessary. If, therefore, an opening is made for the thieving tendency, the other sins also easily follow in its wake. Similarly if there is thieving of the Self, that is, if there is ignorance of the Self, all kinds of bondage immediately follow. The great Master has, in a stanza of his *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, described in detail how this Avidyā is the seed of all kinds of evil.

बीजं संसृतिभूमिजस्य तु तमो देहात्मधीरङ्कुरो
राग: पल्लवमम्बु कर्म तु वपु: स्कन्धोऽसव: शाखिका: ।
अग्राणीन्द्रियसंहतिश्च विषया: पुष्पाणि दु:खं फलं
नानाकर्मसमुद्भवं बहुविधं भोक्तात्र जीव: खग: ॥

The phenomenal life of Bondage is described in this stanza as a tree. The seed of that tree, from which it takes its root and grows, is Darkness, that is, Ignorance. Though ignorance is thus said to be the cause of bondage, ignorance itself is not traced from any other cause and it therefore must be considered as beginningless. If we embark on the enquiry as to when the Ever-Existing and Ever-Free and Ever-Conscious Self became related to ignorance, the answer that we get from the standpoint of absolute truth is that there has been and is no such relation at any time, past, present or future. From the standpoint of relative truth of ordinary practical life when we postulate ignorance of the Self, even then we cannot possibly say that ignorance attached itself to the Self at any particular moment of time for the first time. We can probably say of the knowledge of a person about a particular object that it starts from such and such a date but we can never give a date for the beginning of the ignorance which preceded that knowledge. This does not mean any confession of *our* inability to mention it but ignorance is by its very nature without beginning. If we see a jar, we can say that the knowledge of the jar came into being just now. When did the ignorance of the jar begin to attach itself to us? This is a question which is on the face of it absurd. That is, we can only characterize that ignorance as beginningless. Similarly there can have been no point of time when the Primal Ignorance had its origin. It will certainly, however, have its end on the dawn of Knowledge.

Logicians and some other thinkers do not accept ignorance as the cause of bondage but say that the cause of bondage is the mistaken identification of the Self with the body, etc., which are the non-Self. If we only consider what is the cause of that mistaken identification, we can easily see that it is due to the ignorance of the Self as he really is. If we know the true nature of a thing, there can possibly arise no mistaken conception of it. The cause, therefore, of any mistaken conception as regards a particular thing is only the ignorance of its true nature. Similarly, as regards the mistaken conceptions about the Self, the root cause can only be the ignorance of its own true nature.

2. *The Tree of Phenomenal Life*

From this seed of ignorance springs forth the sprout, the sense of *I* in the body. Ordinarily, the embodiment is considered as threefold, the gross, the subtle and the causal. But as causal ignorance has been considered as the seed, the 'body' referred to in this context can be only the gross and the subtle. If the sense of *I* is entertained in either of these encasements, the Self begins to think that whatever seems good to them is also good for himself. It then begins to want that object: that is, desire ensues. It begins also to think that whatever seems bad for them is bad for himself also. It then begins to shun that object: that is, hate ensues. Thus desire and hate may be said to be the two tender leaves which come out of the sprout. But as hate is really generated when an impediment is placed in the way of satisfying desire, it may not be necessary to classify hate as distinct from desire. That is why in this stanza desire alone is mentioned as the tender leaf.

A plant, to enable it to grow and even to prevent it from withering, does require to be watered. This tree of bondage depends upon the water of Karma, Action. If the activities are reduced, the tree of bondage will tend to fade and, if all activities are eradicated, the tree will wither and die. Similarly, if the activities are increased, the tree of knowledge will grow and grow to greater dimensions. In the stage in which we are at present, there is certainly no dearth of activities. We need not have the least apprehension that the tree of bondage is likely to wither away for want of proper watering. On the other hand, it is ever expanding in all its freshness. Our physical body may be taken to be the trunk of that tree. As we feel that the entire universe of phenomenal life is centred round us and that all the objects found there are intended for our upkeep and nourishment, our body may well be compared to the middle portion of the tree. The life-currents which work up and down and across and in all directions within the body may be compared to the branches of a tree. The sense-organs, situated as they are on the borders of the body, may be compared to the tips of the branches; and, as flowers generally make their appearance only at the outermost ends of the branches, the objects which are related to the corresponding sense-organs are described as the flowers of the tree of bondage. The fruit is but misery.

3. *Objective Pleasure is Really Misery*

It may be asked, how can misery alone be described as the fruit when as a matter of fact both happiness and misery are experienced as the fruits of the tree of bondage? The question is certainly a reasonable one, for happiness and misery are both found in phenomenal life. But there must be some stronger reason which weighed with the Master when he said that misery alone was the fruit. We must consider deeply as to his purpose in doing so. If we do so, we will easily realize that he did not like to give the name of happiness to the happiness obtained by contact with objects of the senses and that he classed that happiness also in the category of misery. Happiness through sensual objects is really no happiness. Nor is the happiness then experienced really the result of contact with those objects. The mind when it entertains the desire to get an object becomes agitated and this agitation is removed when the object is obtained. That is, the mind becomes serene when desire ceases to agitate it. In the serene mind, the bliss inherent in the Self easily reflects itself. Without realizing that the happiness is really a reflection of the Self, we mistakenly think that it is due to contact with the sensual object. It is really only the inherent bliss of the Self realized on the cessation of the disturbing factor, desire.

The happiness obtained on the cessation of desire is ever the same. Whatever may have been the varieties of Desire that preceded it, the bliss had on the cessation of desire is the same. If a man is affected by some disease, you may ask him: "What is the disease you are suffering from?" When he has recovered from the disease and regained his normal health, nobody can ask him: "What is the health you are now having?" The reason is, though diseases may be many and various, health is ever one and the same. There is *no* difference between the health of a person who has recovered from a disease and the health of a person who has not been affected at all by the disease. If we want to make a difference, we must even say that the health of the person who has not been affected by the disease is decidedly far superior to the health of the person who was affected by it and has now recovered from it. Similarly, the happiness of a person who has his mind disturbed by desire, then obtains the object desired and thereby has that desire extinguished and the happiness of the person whose mind is not disturbed at all by that desire must really be equal. If any difference can be postulated between them, it must be said that the happiness of the person who has not been affected at all by the desire is certainly superior to the other.

The number of objects in the universe is limitless. If a particular object is obtained, the desire for that object may cease but there can be no cessation of the desire for other objects. The happiness, therefore, felt on the obtaining of an object is necessarily momentary and cannot be a lasting one. No doubt it may be said that, if one secures to himself all the possible objects of desire in the entire universe, he can have no more desire to disturb his mind and can have therefore lasting happiness. But this is an impossible task. The Śāstras therefore say that, if one really wants to have lasting happiness, he must desist from wandering about in quest of objects, give up desire for those objects and learn to taste the joy of the Self and that there is no other alternative. For the same reasons as stated above, it will be seen that even the sensual happiness is nothing but a reflection of the inherent bliss of the Self. Without realizing this fact, we think that the objects themselves are the cause of happiness, we begin to long for them, we try hard to satisfy that longing, and if we happen to get those objects we take the further trouble of safeguarding them. Further, whenever a particular desire is satisfied, the desire does not really cease but grows more intense so that we long to have more such objects, and the result is that our activities in pursuit of those objects are multiplied. The mind, therefore, does not really get the peace of satisfaction but gets more and more disturbed by further desires. These objects and the happiness obtained through them are, as a matter of fact, hindrances in the way of making efforts for the realization of the supreme Bliss. Considering the matter, therefore, from all aspects, the happiness that seems to result from the contact with objects of the senses has to be viewed really as falling within the category of misery. The Lord has therefore pointed out in His *Gītā*:

ये हि संस्पर्शजा भोगा दुःखयोनय एव ते ।
आद्यन्तवन्तः कौन्तेय न तेषु रमते बुधः ॥

> "All enjoyments had through the contact of the senses with their objects lead only to misery as they have a beginning and an end. The wise man therefore does not revel in them."

It is in this view that the Master has included the sensual happiness in the category of misery and has said that misery is the fruit of the tree of bondage.

If we want to know how deep-rooted our ignorance is, we have only to consider the fact of the illusion of happiness we are all having in the pleasures of phenomenal life. An old gentleman of the Āndhra country who had well mastered the Vedas once visited the Mysore State. He had lost most of his teeth. But as he had heard that the betel leaves of Mysore were very tender and tasty he wanted to taste them. He put a few leaves and some small areca-nut slicings into his mouth and began to chew them. But as the latter were a little tough to chew, his gums began to bleed and his lips were stained with blood. A friend who saw this said, "The method of chewing betel leaves evidently in vogue in your part of the country is really very commendable. However carefully we may prepare the leaves, our lips do not get the redness of yours." The old man who did not see that this was spoken in jest took it really as a compliment to himself and was much pleased, so much so that he went on chewing with more zest. The result was that the gums got so far hurt as to make him forego the night meal. This gentleman not only did not realize that the redness of the lips was due to the blood coming out of his own gums but thought it due to the chewing of betel leaves and found even happiness in it without minding the pain. What is the reason? The same is the case of those who think that happiness results from contact with sense-objects.

A mango tree will yield only mango fruits. Similarly, every other tree will yield only fruits of a particular variety. But this tree of bondage is quite unique in this respect. As the actions in which the individuals engage themselves are various, the fruits thereof also have to be various. Who can possibly catalogue the varieties of the fruits of the actions done by them from the four-faced Brahmā down to the tiniest plant? Which is the bird which tastes these fruits? The Master says that it is but the Jīva, the individual Soul.

4. *Eradicate Ignorance*

If we now carefully scan the meaning of the stanza explained above, it will be seen that ignorance alone is the cause of bondage. If we want to cut and fell the tree of bondage and secure for ourselves immunity from all misery for ever, we must cut at its primary root of ignorance. And ignorance can be eradicated only by its opposite, Knowledge of the Self. There is no other alternative. Please consider the magnitude of devotion that we must have towards a Guru who imparts to us such a knowledge. Do not think that everything is knowledge and do not study all and sundry books. Do not believe either what all you come across. If we are ignorant about worldly matters, there is not much danger to us. As long as the ignorance of the Self inheres in us, we cannot really escape from any danger. We want to know this and we want to know that; and we begin to read whatever book appears in print. It has become impossible for us to refrain from reading the newspapers. I have heard that the editor of a newspaper once lacked news for filling up all the pages of his paper and there was no matter for about half a column. He at once asked the printer to fill it up with a graphic and detailed story, improvised for the occasion, of an unfortunate tragedy of a boy drowned in a tank in a particular town. There was still some space left. He filled it up with the note: "The above was published on information supplied to us but on later enquiry we are glad to inform our readers that the information is not true." It is in reading such news that our lives are wasted.

Nīlakaṇṭa Dīkṣitar has well described how people spend their time aimlessly.

वङ्गाः कथमङ्गाः कथमित्यनुयुङ्क्ते वृथा देशान् ।
कीदृक् कृतान्तपुरमिति कोऽपि न जिज्ञासते लोकः ॥

How do the people of the Anga country live? What are the residents of the Vanga country doing? It is in such enquiries and studies that we spend our time. We do not care to ascertain the nature of the city of Yama, the God of Death to which we are all bound to go at some time or other, sooner or later, and we do not have even the slightest desire to know about it.

If a man realizes what jail life is, he will hesitate to steal and will be afraid. Similarly if we acquaint ourselves with the Śāstras which tell us of virtue and vice and their results and with the Śāstras that impart to us the knowledge leading to the supreme Bliss, we shall be immensely benefited. To obtain proper knowledge of the same, we must seek a Guru and surrender ourselves to him.

CHAPTER XII

THE NATURE OF THE SELF

1. The Object of the Highest Love

We have stated before that Knowledge of the Self alone can free us from Bondage. But we must know well what that Self is. The word 'Self' is no doubt a very simple one but many a doubt arises when we seek to arrive at its exact significance. It cannot be gainsaid that everybody has boundless love for himself. If he loves anything other than himself, it is an object of love only so long as it is agreeable to him. The love of one's self, however, is ever present and does not depend upon any extraneous cause. Even if other things sometimes seem lovable to him, the same things may become the reverse at other times. But the Self alone ever remains lovable, and never becomes the reverse. All thinkers realize this basic fact. In defining, therefore, the Self, they describe it as the object of the highest love.

देहं केऽपि वदन्ति खानि तु परे प्राणान्मनश्चापरे
बुद्धिं च क्षणिकां स्थिरामथ परे केचिच्चितं निस्सुखाम् ।

आत्मानं जडचित्स्वभावमपरे चिद्रज्जडं चेतरे
सत्यज्ञानसुखाद्वितीयमपरे तत्रास्य को निश्चयः ॥

Though they are all agreed on this definition, they still quarrel among themselves as to what that object is. Some say that, as all pleasure and pain in the world have reference only to the gross body of flesh and blood, it is this body that is the object of the highest love. Some say that, inasmuch as we are anxious to save our eyes and other organs from hurt even at the risk of receiving blows on our backs or other portions of the body, it is the organs that really have our highest love. But as people generally desire to live on even if they lose their senses of sight and hearing, others say that life is really the object of our highest love. If the mind is unable to work, what does it matter if one is able merely to live? Some say, therefore, that the mind alone is the object of our highest love. If the mind begins to wander as it likes without any controlling force above it, the man is called mad; the intellect, therefore, which is needed to keep the mind under control is really more important and worthy of being the object of our highest love. Doubts again arise as regards the nature of this intellect. Is it momentary or permanent? Some say that the Self transcends the intellect and is pure consciousness but without bliss. Others say that the Self is a mixture of the conscious and the unconscious. Some say that the Self is an unconscious entity having the attribute of consciousness. Some others say that it is ever-existent, conscious and blissful and without a second. What are we to decide in the midst of these various versions?

2. *The Body is Not the Self*

To say that the body is the Self is the grossest of these versions. The body is composed of the five elements, is subject to modifications every moment and is an inert mass of flesh. How can we call it the Self? It does not require much reasoning to tell us that the Self is different from the body. We can easily realize this in our daily experience. If the body is the Self, we must be able to sleep in an erect sitting posture. Why are we not able to sleep in that posture? Why does the body fall down? If the Self is the body itself and is by its power of consciousness able to sustain it in an erect posture during the waking state, it must sustain it even during sleep. Why does the body totter and fall down in sleep? We explain it thus: the sense of 'I' which we have in the body during the waking state gets relaxed during the state of sleep and the body therefore begins to fall down. There will be a time when this body will require four people to carry it with difficulty (to the cremation ground) but at this moment we are carrying this heavy burden ourselves by reason of the sustaining force of the sense of 'I' which we have in it. It will be clearly seen that somebody other than the body is necessary to entertain this sense of 'I' in it, to sustain it by its force and to carry its weight.

I have heard it said that persons born deaf hear sounds and persons born blind see forms in their dreams. How could they hear or see? As dreams are ordinarily the result of impressions received and stored up during the waking state, it may be possible for a person who had the power of sight for some years after his birth and later lost it somehow to see forms in dreams by reason of the impressions received during the time when he was able to see. But the person born blind has never seen anything. How can he see anything in his dreams? If his seeing is a fact, we must conclude therefrom that apart from this body with the blinded organs there is somebody else in him who has the power of sight. Similarly the ears of the born deaf person will not have heard any sounds in this life. Still, if in previous births he has stored up impressions by the exercise of the ears that then functioned, he can now have the experience of hearing sounds in dreams. If this body is itself the Self, what explanation can be given for such phenomena? A man affected by partial paralysis will have no feeling of touch in the part affected but he can certainly say that during his dreams he had the pleasure of a very soft bed. This will clearly show that the experiencer in the dream state is not this body. From this it follows that this body cannot be the Self.

It is said of the great Master, Śrī Śaṁkarācārya, that, on one occasion he left his body and entered another's. He consigned his body to the care of his disciples and, enlivening the dead body of King Amaruka, stayed there for some time. If so, one body must be left behind and another body entered into. The mere fact of leaving one and entering an other assumes that the entity that leaves and enters is distinct from the body left or entered into. That is, the bodies are distinct from the Soul which chooses to inhabit them. It would seem that the great Master enacted this incident in his life just to show to us that the Soul was distinct from the body. The same thing will be clear if we consider the story of His disciple Śrī Hastāmalaka. As he realized the Supreme Self and was able to expound its nature as clearly as a fruit in the palm of our hand is seen by us, he got this significant name of Hastāmalaka.

There was a very devout Brāhmaṇa, Prabhākara by name, in the village of Śrībhala. One day he and his wife with their young child went to bathe in the river in a sacred place. When the attention of the parents was elsewhere, the child which was left on the bank crawled slowly and fell into the current. The unfortunate parents and the others assembled there took out the body of the dead child and began to cry very piteously. It so happened that at that time a saint was seated in contemplation some distance off. He was disturbed by the grief of these people and his heart melted. He left his own body and entered that of the dead child. The parents naturally thought that their own child had revived. Their joy knew no bounds and they took the child to their home. But the child did not speak even when it grew up. It took no interest in any affair, domestic or worldly. The parents were very much pained at the idiocy of their boy. When the proper time for investing him with the sacred thread arrived, they had to do the ceremonies in the form prescribed for mutes. Some time thereafter by a rare good fortune the great Master, Śrī Śaṁkarācārya, happened to visit that village. The parents thought that, if they took the boy to him, his mind might get clear by the gracious blessings of the Master and they accordingly led him to that sacred presence. As soon as the Master saw the boy, he asked him "Who are you?" The boy immediately replied, "I am not the inert body, etc. I am that by reason of whose existence they are active. I am above all these. I am the Self, the Ever-Conscious" and so on. His reply was in the form of some beautiful stanzas wherein he condensed the essence of the teachings of the Upaniṣads. Everyone there immediately realized that they were all mistaken till then in thinking that he was a dunce and that he was really a great seer who had the inestimable treasure of Self-Knowledge and had accordingly preferred an attitude of silence. The great Master also was very much pleased with the answer. As it was felt and decided by all that his proper place was by the side of the Master, he was allowed to stay with him. It is this boy that is known as Hastāmalakācārya. Before the saint entered the dead body of the child that fell into the river, he had practised the courses of training in Śravaṇa (hearing), Manana (cogitating) and Nididhyāsana (assimilating) of the truth of the Upaniṣads and, before he could reach the stage of firmness in Self-Realization, he was overpowered by pity and entered the child's body but the previous training and realization continued in the latter also. This story will show that the Yoga Śāstra is neither incorrect nor inconsistent with reason or experience. In the context in which we refer to this story, it is useful to demonstrate to us clearly that the Soul which enters, enlivens and moves this inert body of flesh and blood is certainly quite distinct from it.

Throughout the world all people long for happiness and all their efforts are only to secure it. But, with a view to get happiness, they do not hesitate to give trouble to their bodies by making them carry, if necessary, water or other things from a great distance. That the bodies do suffer in this process is very clear. If the body is itself the Self, will it ever consent to bear the heat of the sun or to carry heavy things? It is only because the Self is something different from the body that it is possible to impose trouble on the inert body for securing happiness to that Self. Have we not heard of King Hariśchandra and his innumerable sufferings? He was the unquestioned emperor of the whole earth. He lost his kingdom. He lost his son. He had to sell away his wife. He himself had to become the slave of a Cāṇḍāla and suffered a great deal. If his body were his Self, would he have lost his kingdom, wife or child? He knew, on the other hand, that the Self was quite different from the body, that for the sake of the Self it did not matter in the least how the body and other possessions fared and that he must care only for the good of the Self. He was firm therefore and abandoned and sacrificed everything else. Everybody wants happiness for one's Self but it will be seen from what we have stated above that the Self for which happiness is sought is not the body.

3. *The Faculties are Not the Self*

It may now be conceded that the body which is but an inert mass of flesh cannot be the Self. But the senses which are subtle in their nature and give light may well be the Self. The senses by which knowledge is obtained are known as the senses of perception. The senses by which activities are engaged in are known as the senses of action. The ear hears sounds. The skin knows hard and smooth touch. The eye sees forms. The tongue recognizes tastes like sweetness. The nose takes in smell like that of flowers. The vocal organ speaks. The feet walk. The hands grasp. The organs of excretion and coition do their functions. These organs and senses must not be confused with the physical bodily portions actually perceived by us as doing these functions. They are really subtle faculties making it possible for the latter to function. The senses of perception are five in number, so also the senses of action. Thus there are ten senses or faculties.

Is every one of these ten a Self by itself so that we have ten selves or is the Self an aggregrate of all the ten? If we postulate Self-hood to each one of the senses, and if it so happens that a person loses a particular sense, we must say of him that he has lost a *Self*. Further, a person who saw some object says that *he* saw it. If there is one Self for seeing and another Self for saying, the statement would be false. Again, there cannot be two presidents for an assembly or two kings for a state. It is said,

गुरुद्वयं शिष्यनिपातहेतुः ।

"A disciple is bound to suffer if he has two Gurus."

While so, if the body were to be ruled over by ten selves, it will soon get disintegrated. If each one of the selves begins to give varying and inconsistent directions to the body, who can prevent them? How is it possible to ensure that they should all act in concert? They are all of equal status. The body will get torn in the midst of their directions. It will, therefore, be against all reason if we ascribe Self-hood to each one of the senses separately.

It will be like saying that Śiva, Viṣṇu and Brahmā are distinct Gods. If They are really distinct from one another, it may happen that, just when one wants to create, another will want to destroy and that, when one wants to destroy, another will want to protect. There will be no agreement among Them. It is we who are under the rule of all these three that will have to suffer. As a matter of fact, there is but one God who is the Creator of the universe, who sustains it and who absorbs it in Himself. He alone assumes various forms as Śiva, Viṣṇu and Brahmā so that the individual Souls, subject as they are to their innate natures and prenatal tendencies, may choose any form that appeals to them and attain good through the worship of that form.

All the Three are really one and are not distinct from one another. If we postulate, therefore, mastery over our body as vested in ten distinct selves corresponding to the ten senses, our body will soon cease to be.

We have seen ten people join together and lift a heavy beam. Similarly the ten senses may be said to join together in the task of keeping up this body. That is, the Self, the power of sustenance behind the body, may be conceived of as consisting of the aggregate of all the senses put together. If this aggregate of ten were the Self and if it happens that one sense is lost, the "aggregate of ten" ceases to be; that is, there is no Self any longer. If a person therefore becomes blind or becomes a mute, he cannot any longer have a Self as he has not *all* the senses which together form the aggregate known as the Self and he must necessarily cease to be, that is, must die. But we see deaf persons, though they do not have all the ten senses, living and also several others who are lacking in more faculties than one. The want of two, three or four senses does not stand in the way of their living on. Further, as an assembly dwindles when people begin to walk out, the Self must grow smaller when there is a reduction in the number of the senses functioning; but have we ever heard of the Self becoming attenuated?

स्वानामात्मत्ववादे प्रतिनियतगतौ स्वाभिनानात्वदोषाद्
देहोन्माथप्रसङ्गः समुदितविषये त्वन्धमूका म्रियेरन् ।
उक्तिर्दृष्टश्रुतानामपि च न घटते नापि सङ्घो निरूप्यः
स्वप्नद्रष्टैव न स्याच्छयनमरणयोर्निर्विशेषाद्वयं स्यात् ॥

Further, we call that the waking state wherein the eye sees, the ear hears and the other senses function as regards the things in the world outside. When the senses and the mind retire, it is sleep. If the senses were the Self, the state wherein the senses (that is, the Self) retire cannot be different from death and we must be as much afraid of sleep as we are of death. But the experience is otherwise. We seek sleep with pleasure. Nobody will seek the disappearance of the Self. It is, therefore, clearly seen that during sleep, even though the senses and the mind are not functioning, there is somebody else who is enjoying the bliss of sleep. The physical organs like the ear and the eye are quite as they are, even while the man is asleep. But he does not hear or see anything with their aid; but all the same he does hear and does see in his dreams. If the outward-turned senses were the Self, who can be that entity who seems to have all the senses and has experiences in the dream state? Even those who have lost their hands, feet, eyes or ears do not feel their loss and have full enjoyment in their dreams as if they do have these. How is it possible? From considerations like these, we have to conclude that the senses neither individually nor in the aggregate are the Self and that the Self is really quite distinct from them.

4. *The Vital Energy is Not the Self*

It may be that the gross body is not the Self and that the senses which are but instruments are not the

Self. We say that a man lives so long as there is breath in the body and that he is dead if there is no breath. It would seem, therefore, that breath is the Self. Let us consider the matter even from a very lay point of view. If it is the breath that is the Self ruling over this body, we can call it the king of this city, the body. The senses will be the servants of this king. But we see that during deep sleep the senses all retire to rest but the breath is going on with its function of inspiration and expiration. Is it reasonable to assume that the servant senses have retired somewhere to take rest delegating the king breath to keep guard over the body-city? Will it be even good manners? If the breath were the Self, the senses dare not do any such thing. Have we heard of a king working on incessantly when the servants have gone to sleep? The breath has no time for rest either during sleep or during dreams but the senses have. It is the king that has to work on without any rest. Does this appeal to our reason or even our sense of propriety?

As a means to control the mind, the Yoga-Śāstra prescribes the regulation of inspiration and expiration, the functions of the breath. The breathing-out is called Rechaka or evacuating and the breathing-in is called Pūraka or filling up. The process by which the breathed-in air is retained for some time undisturbed by any movement, just as water in a pot full to the brim, is known as Kuṁbhaka or retention. If the breath has movement, the mind also moves; if the breath is motionless, the mind also is motionless. We see thus an intimate connection between the breath and the mind. In the same way, if the mind becomes one-pointed, the breath will be held up. A man deeply immersed in sorrow heaves a heavy sigh. Why? When the mind is solely occupied with sorrow and is centred only in it, the breath also is automatically restrained and comes out in an elongated form when released. Our ancients who had well realized this intimate relationship between the breath and the mind became great by mastering the mind through control of the breath.

If we only consider a little, we will easily notice that we also are really doing what they were doing but the result is exactly the reverse. We also hold our breath and undergo many troubles. The Ṛṣis of old lived with great patience. We also are patient when our superior officers get angry with us; we are necessarily patient as it is not proper for us to show our resentment, and we have to suppress our feelings and endure the insults. The Ṛṣis dared the sun's heat and rain and did penance. We also have to roam about irrespective of the heat or rain. We keep awake even beyond midnight and do our work and have to put up with heat, the rain or the wind. Just as the Ṛṣis sat in the middle of the five fires in the hot season and did penance, we also are moving about in the hot sun for transacting our business and endure the scorching heat. The word 'Tapas' used for denoting penance literally means burning and we are also undergoing tapas in that sense. The ancients were content to eat fruits and roots and live in forests. We do not get even these and roam about in the country, in forests or in towns and suffer. The Ṛṣis left their homes and lived in voluntary exile. We leave our homes and relations if only we get a living at Delhi or even a more distant place. The Ṛṣis abandoned everything owing to their sense of detachment. We have also to forego many things as we cannot get them. They controlled their breath and concentrated their mind on God. We think of money without time for breathing. Thus we also practically do whatever the ancient Ṛṣis were doing. They gave up sensual pleasures and sensual objects and obtained genuine pleasure and peace of mind and the highest benefits. But, as we are giving up the same things very reluctantly and with sorrow, the same activities yield us different results and we stand cheated. The poet Bhartṛhari has beautifully expressed what has been stated above in a single stanza:

क्षान्तं न क्षमया गृहोचितसुखं त्यक्तं न संतोषत:
सोढा दु:सहशीतवाततपनक्लेशा न तप्तं तप: ।
ध्यातं वित्तमहर्निशं नियभितप्राणैर्न शंभो: पदं
तत्तत्कर्मकृतं यदेव मुनिभिस्तैस्तै: फलैर्वञ्चिता: ।।

It is seen that in either kind of effort the control of the breath is necessary. However much a man may have trained his body by means of physical exercises and however much he may be a proficient in athletics, it is impossible for him to stand on his own shoulders. He can show his ability by standing upon the shoulders of others. With one hand he may catch hold of another person and he may catch hold also of the other hand of his own but the hand cannot catch itself. If we hold our breath, we can lift up heavy things. By proper exercise of the control of the breath, even heavy chains may be burst asunder. It is seen from all this that the functioning of life, known as breath, can be regulated. As stated just before, what regulates and controls the breath can never be the breath itself. The controlling entity must be something different from the controlled breath. If the breath has to be controlled only by itself, all the teachings of the Śāstras which refer to the control of the breath will be meaningless. Only if we conceive of the breath as a dependant and a subordinate thing, will it be possible to control it. The Self is the master of even the breath. The Self is ever-conscious and, if the breath were the Self, it must be conscious of a thief entering the house while all are asleep; and can it tolerate such a thing? If the breath were the Self, where did its conscious nature disappear on such occasions? It is seen from this that consciousness is not an attribute of breath, that breath has really no initiative of action, much less the doership of action and the breath has no independence of its own. The breath (meaning thereby the life-principle, Prāṇa, manifested in the process of breathing) cannot, therefore, be considered the Self.

5. *The Mind is Not the Self*

For the very same reasons, the mind also (including the intellect) cannot be the Self. When we are talking to a person on some subject, he sometimes interrupts us by saying, "My mind was elsewhere. Will you kindly repeat what you were saying?" The person who knows that the mind had gone somewhere else must certainly be different from that mind. We perceive our senses performing their respective functions and we realize therefrom that we, the perceivers, are different from the senses which are perceived. Similarly we do perceive that the mind is active; we can easily see therefrom that we are different from the mind which is perceived. The seer is always different from the seen. The witness and the thing witnessed are necessarily distinct from each other. The perceiver is one and the perceived is another, distinct from the former. As the mind falls under the category of things perceived, the Self which perceives the mind must necessarily be different from it. Further, just as the breath is capable of being controlled, so is the mind equally capable of being controlled. It can be controlled even through the control of the breath. Suppose a cow is grazing in a field and eating the young crops there. She has intelligence enough to know that she must be careful that nobody can hear the sound made by her in munching the crops. If she hears the sound of the approaching footsteps of some person, she holds her breath and makes no noise. The thief who steals makes no noise and holds his breath. It is thus seen that even animals and the most ordinary human beings know how to hold their breath and to restrain their mind. This power of control is with all but is rarely used in the pursuit of good aim. We ever find it difficult to control the breath and the mind for doing good deeds. We are unable to practise breath-control. We are unable to practise concentration of mind. The breath declines to come under our control and the mind persists in its wanderings. It is not so, however, in other matters; we are quite able to be very careful just like the thief. The thief forcibly controls his mind and keeps it on evil deeds. If we practise such forcible control and direct the mind on good things, then also will it come under control. The Lord has stated in His *Gītā*:

अभ्यासेन तु कौन्तेय वैराग्येण च गृह्यते ।

> "The mind can be restrained by practice and detachment."

If the mind was itself the Self, the Śāstras prescribing breath-control, detachment, practice and other means of controlling the mind will be meaningless.

In former days the Ṛṣis brought their breath under control and concentrated their mind upon God and became great. To those like Hastāmalaka who had already practised the means, the mind will easily and of its own accord come under control. To those whose minds refuse to be easily controlled, Haṭhayoga, the practice of compulsory restraint, will be useful. If a cow is let out for grazing and returns home but does not enter the cattle-shed, there are two ways of making her go there. Show some young green grass and use kind words and slowly induce her to go inside the shed, or you may take a stick, drive the cow here and there and drive her ultimately into the shed for want of any other way of escape. Just as the cowherd calls in the aid of his servants, sticks and ropes to get hold of a recalcitrant cow, we must resort to breath-control and other devices for the subjugation of our mind, if it refuses to be otherwise brought under control.

The witness who perceives that the mind is roaming about and that the mind has now been controlled and who is really the Controller himself—he alone can be the Self.

CHAPTER XIII

THE BLISS OF THE SELF

1. *Mistaken Conceptions*

WE have seen that Selfhood can be postulated only of that entity which transcends and rules over the body, the senses, the mind, etc., and is able to perceive them and their activities as a witness distinct from them. While so, if anybody says that Selfhood belongs to the body, the senses, etc., which are the non-Self and are inert, the Śāstras are well justified in calling him a big thief, as stated once before. It was also stated that, once he commits the mistake of imposing Selfhood upon the body, etc., he will easily have the daring to commit other sins. When the Self is really the object of the highest love, he thinks that that definition applies to the body, etc., and, once he does so, he naturally becomes ready to commit all sins for their sake. The attributing of Selfhood to the body, etc., which are the non-Self is perceived only during the waking and the dream states. Pain also is experienced only in those two states. There is no such mistaken attribution at the time of deep sleep and there is no misery at all then and we experience only happiness. From this also we see clearly not be disturbed by misery at that time. Only when it is free from disturbing factors, will it be pure. In other words, all sins must be eradicated. Similarly when the mind is disturbed by the desire for objective pleasures, it can never be concentrated. We must, therefore, keep the mind free from desire also. Till we realize in actual experience that the body, etc., are not the Self, the idea of doership as an attribute of the '*I*' in us will persist. As the Lord has stated in the *Gītā*, it is not possible for anybody to remain inactive even for a single second:

न हि कश्चित् क्षणमपि जातु तिष्ठत्यकर्मकृत् ।

If we must therefore be active in some way or other, it is only reasonable to say that we must avoid all sorts of prohibited activities and engage ourselves in the activities enjoined by the Śāstras. Even among the enjoined activities, those which are dictated by desire lead only to further bondage. It seems therefore that we must confine ourselves to such activities as are enjoined by the Śāstras to be compulsory. The ancients would even restrict the word Karma or Action to such activities only as do not lead to bondage:

तत्कर्म यन्न बन्धाय ।

The several sacrificial rites and other activities prescribed in the Śāstras have, therefore, to be performed without the slightest desire for their fruits and in a spirit of obedient surrender or oblation to God. It is only then that they will not bind us. The Lord has emphasized this point repeatedly in the *Gītā*.

3. *Duty Has Its Own Reward*

Some people say that there is no benefit at all to be obtained by the performance of the Nitya or compulsory activities and that their performance only prevents us from incurring the sin of not performing them. That is, the performance of the Saṁdhyā worship and other daily duties do not lead to any accumulation of merit or to the attainment of heaven. But as their non-performance is sinful, we have to perform them only to save us from that sin. That is not the conclusion of the Vedāntī. It is not proper to say that there is no merit in performing an action enjoined by the Śāstras. If they had only considered the significance of the word "Injunction" they would not say so.

There are three necessary elements involved in any injunction. Firstly, the possibility of performing the action enjoined; secondly, its conduciveness to a positive benefit to the person performing it; and thirdly, the absence of any possibility of a great harm being caused to him. As the daily duties are certainly enjoined by the Śāstras, they cannot be wanting in the second element mentioned above. They must be conducive to a positive benefit, that is, some desirable result. In the Pūrva Mīmāṁsā, it has been declared that, even though no reward is promised expressly for the performance of the sacrifice known as Viśvajit, still the ordinary heaven must be taken as the reward, as the sacrifice is one enjoined by the Śāstras. There is no reward mentioned even for the sacrifice known as Rātri Satra. From the laudatory passages that follow the injunction, a similar reward is inferred for this sacrifice also. It may be said that as these two sacrifices come under the category of desireful actions and as no specific reward is mentioned in the context, sage Jaimini may be justified in inferring a positive benefit in the case of these sacrifices also and that the same reasoning will not be applicable in the case of daily duties. There is a passage in the Upaniṣads which says generally that one attains Pitṛloka by Karma. Sage Jaimini could well have relied upon this passage:

कर्मणा पितृलोकः ।

as a positive textual authority prescribing the Pitṛloka as the reward of all action enjoined by the Śāstras. As, however, he did not do so, this passage must be taken as not applying to desireful actions. There can therefore be no objection to interpreting this passage as laying down the reward of Pitṛloka to those who perform their daily duties properly and without desire. It may be asked, is not the purification of the mind the result of the performance of daily duties? It is no doubt so and it is the most important result. But the Pitṛloka is a secondary benefit which also ensues as the result of the performance of daily duties.

Further, the non-accrual of the sin said to be consequent on the non-performance of daily duties is of a purely negative character and cannot be the resultant of the performance of those duties. Again, the non-performance of the duties is itself of a negative character and cannot be the cause of sin which is certainly positive. This is not consistent with reason. We must, therefore, conclude that there is a positive benefit that accrues from the performance of the daily duties. But we must not allow our mind to be attracted by that benefit and we must do the actions as our duty and make an oblation of them to God.

If we do so, our mind will become pure. If it becomes pure, there will be no desire or vacillation in it. The mind made so pure will easily turn towards the Self. The sense of *I* in the body, the senses, etc., which are different from the Self will disappear. Detachment like that of the great Saint Śrī Sadaśivendra will be possible.

शान्ताहंकृतिदोषः सुसमाहितमानसः कोऽपि ।
पूर्णेन्दुशिशिरभावो राजत्यानन्दसत्यचिद्रसिकः ॥

The realization that the Self is essentially unrelated to anything is possible only in the case of one whose mind is entirely detached and is pristinely pure. The realization of the Self is possible only for him. He is perfect and has nothing to strive for.

CHAPTER XIV

NEED FOR STRENUOUS EFFORT

1. *Strive Even Now*

It has been stated before that it is impossible to have supreme happiness unless the realization of the Self is had; that for realizing the Self the sense of *I* which we have in the body, etc., which are really the non-Self, must go; that for eradicating the sense of *I* the mind must become pure and that for the mind becoming pure the performance of the enjoined duties desirelessly and in a spirit of oblation to God is a necessity. In some religions, they accept only this birth. They say that, as the result of the good or bad deeds done now, we are rewarded with eternal happiness or punished with eternal misery; and they, therefore, justly insist upon our engaging ourselves now earnestly in the pursuit of the good. According to our religion, however, we have been taking countless births from time without beginning and we have the sure chance of taking more countless births in the infinite future. It may, therefore, be justly asked of us: "What is the hurry now? If nothing is attained in this birth, we shall attend to it in the next; if we do not attain anything even then, we shall exert ourselves in the birth after that. We need be apprehensive only if we have only this birth to make efforts in. There is no such urgent need for us." Such questions arise only by reason of our innate laziness and want of faith.

We have by a rare fortune, the result of some unknown virtue stored up in the past, got this birth as a human being. Is it at all proper to waste this rare opportunity? We must consider this deeply. If we ourselves slight and neglect this birth as a human being, what guarantee is there that, when we are born again, we will be born as human beings? If we do not recognize the importance of this birth but waste it, can we with any propriety expect God to give us the same birth once again? Further, it will not be sufficient if we are born again as human beings. We must practise therein the means prescribed in the Śāstras for attaining Knowledge in this birth. A single birth may not be sufficient for a complete carrying out of the means. The result will ensue only if the means are practised in several births. The Lord states in the *Gītā* that one attains the highest goal after securing perfection in the course of many births and that one becomes a knower after very many births and then goes to Him.

अनेकजन्मसंसिद्धस्ततो याति परां गतिम् ॥
बहूनां जन्मनामन्ते ज्ञानवान्मां प्रपद्यते ॥

He, therefore, emphasizes the fact that the births have to be many before the efforts can bear fruit. The mere number of births has no relevancy, if all the births are barren of any effort. If the number alone is counted, we have till now taken countless births and must be qualified for Knowledge. The births, therefore, must not be many merely in number but there must be many births in each one of which strenuous endeavour is made to qualify oneself for Knowledge. Simply because we are lacking in such endeavour, we are going on taking birth after birth and are not any the nearer to Knowledge.

If we look into this matter more deeply, there is room even to think that we have certainly endeavoured, but endeavoured in the opposite direction with the deliberate object of not attaining good. The Lord took human forms as Śrī Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa and trod this earth of ours. It is said that He saved countless persons by making them pure and giving them salvation, some by His grace, some by His punishment, some by His look and some by His touch, and so on. We also must have inhabited the earth at that time in some form or another. It is now clearly seen that, even while so, we have taken care to *avoid* contact with those Divine Presences. If we had been but a tiny plant, a creeper or a shrub in the dense forest of Daṇḍaka, where He roamed about on foot, we could have come into contact with the dust of His sacred feet and become pure and perfect. We have now to conclude that we carefully kept away from the paths taken by Him and were in actual hiding then. Mere births, therefore, barren of any effort towards good are useless. The births must be those which are spent in the performance of the good deeds prescribed as the service of the Lord and as the means of earning His grace; and there must be many such births. To do such deeds in the service of the Lord is possible only in the birth as a human being and not in other kinds of birth. It may be quite an easy thing to get another birth, but to get birth again as a human being is a very difficult matter.

2. *Strive Even Here*

Birth as a human being is the first and foremost requisite for attaining Freedom from Bondage. Even for attaining the pleasures of heaven, human birth is the best. Sacrificial rites intended to please Indra and other gods can be performed here and heaven secured. The same activities may be performed desirelessly and we may get purification of mind and through it Knowledge and Freedom. The gods have no such facility. If Indra and other higher gods want to perform any sacrificial rite, to whom are they to offer oblations? Can it be to Agni and others, who are inferior to themselves? Action done with devotion to somebody superior to the doer will alone be fruitful. This is not possible in the case of the Devas. When men perform sacrificial rites, they make the oblation saying, "This is not mine," thereby abandoning the attachment, the sense of 'mine,' in the thing offered. This is the significance of the oblation. As the Devas are beings higher than men, it is possible for men to expect grace from the Devas and they worship the Devas therefore. It is not so with the Devas themselves. If they were to make an oblation, they also would have to say, "This is not mine." Even though they might pronounce this sentence, where are they to place the oblation? As the Devas are by their nature present everywhere according to their respective functions in the universe, they could not possibly place the oblation anywhere; for all places are occupied by them. For this reason and for the reason already stated that there are no higher beings to whom they can offer sacrifices, it is impossible for the Devas to engage themselves in any sacrificial rites. It is no doubt said in the Purāṇas that Brahmā and some other Devas have performed sacrifices; but it must be noted that in each case the entity sought to be propitiated is always somebody higher than the sacrificing Devas and that invariably the sacrifices are performed only on the plane of this earth and with limited human forms assumed by the Devas for the occasion.

As there is thus no room for enjoined activities in the region of the Devas, it is not possible either to secure there purity of mind. It may be asked, why cannot the truth of the Upaniṣads be enquired into and the Self realized there, even though there is no facility for the performance of Karma in that region? Even that is not possible. The regions of the Devas and other higher beings are all planes of enjoyment. In the Devaloka there is abundance of sensual pleasures. The mind will be engrossed only in them. It is well known that those who inhabit the Gandharvaloka are very sensuous in their nature. How will the mind engrossed in the pleasures of the senses turn towards the acquisition of Knowledge? It is said very clearly in the Upaniṣads that only the Brahmaloka and this Bhūloka are planes of Knowledge. Of these two regions, the region of Brahmā is attainable only by those who have limitless store of special merit prescribed in the Śāstras as qualifying them for entry therein. Only those who are so specially qualified can go there, sit at the feet of Brahmā, learn and enquire into the truth and attain the Knowledge of the Self. How is it possible for those whose store of merit is but ordinary to aspire to get any admission into that region of Brahmā?

Further, for the acquisition of the qualifications necessary to gain admission there, the virtuous actions prescribed in the Śāstras have all to be performed only here in this world of ours. Is it an easy thing at all to perform them? How long a time will it take to perform them? And what will be the magnitude of the trouble involved in performing them? We can as well spend in the earnest pursuit of Knowledge itself all the time we have to spend in such activities and we can as well utilize in the attempt to realize Truth all the energy we have to use in trying to get to that region. Further, non-attachment, a necessary requisite for the attainment of Knowledge, is possible only in this world, which is full of misery, and the non-attachment once obtained here will be a lasting one. In the Devaloka and other regions there is no such facility for acquiring the sense of non-attachment.

Again, if we want to realize the true nature of the Self, we must learn to separate the Self from the body, etc., which are the non-Self and this is possible only to those who have opportunities of seeing the Self mixed up with the non-Self on some occasions and standing distinct on other occasions. The Devas have only the waking state. They never sleep or dream. As we experience all the three states in rotation, we have pain and pleasure and can know that the Self really transcends them both and we get a longing to reach that transcendent stage and make efforts to attain it. This is not possible in the case of the Devas, who have only the waking state, where the Self is identified with the non-Self. Further, the desire for liberation and for Knowledge, the means thereto, can properly arise only in us, who are able to see clearly that our bodies are subject to decay and death and are, therefore, very impermanent and that their defects are countless. As the bodies of the Devas are free from defects and remain for a very long time without any change, they will think that they can conveniently put off the attempt to attain salvation, just as we are doing many a thing even in this very limited life of ours. That is, their attachment to the sensual pleasures available to them will dull their eagerness to attain Knowledge. Thus, in whatever way we consider the matter, it is evident that our earthly world is far more preferable to the celestial regions in the matter of affording facilities to attain Knowledge.

As the beings lower than the human lack in the sense of discrimination, it is unnecessary to dilate upon the fact that they are not competent either for Action or for Knowledge. The great Master has pointed out more than once that even among human beings, birth as a male is very commendable. Apart from the fact that women are not competent to study the Scriptures, they are by their very constitution and nature incapable of being independent and the Śāstras also confirm this. Chastity alone is prescribed as the means of their salvation. The Dharma of chastity consists in looking upon the husband as God Himself and serving him with all her three instruments known as the mind, speech and body. The Śāstras say that those who serve their husbands according to this Dharma of chastity are born as men in their later births, attain Knowledge then and get freed from Bondage. The Dharma of chastity is thus a means to Liberation, though it may not be an immediate means. But it still leads to Liberation ultimately. But man has the facility to attain Knowledge of the Self even now. It is because of this reason that the birth as a man is said to be superior to that as a woman.

3. Do Not Waste This Birth

But no Knowledge will dawn if a person is merely born as a human being and a man. He must make determined efforts to attain it. The truth must be deeply investigated into before one can know it. The Knowledge obtained as the result of such investigation must be realized in actual experience. This is called the practice of Knowledge, Jñānabhyāsa. The main quest is to get satisfactory answers to the questions: " Who am I? How did I get this embodiment? What is the means by which I shall get no more embodiment?" Those endowed with the slightest intelligence will easily realize that such an enquiry is necessary and urgently called for. But most people do not think about it at all. They spend their boyhood, from their birth to about sixteen years of age, in play and sports. During the period of youth, they wander about in search of sensual pleasures. Then they are overrun by old age, which makes all their faculties weak. Then comes the end of this embodiment. They waste away their whole life without spending any time in the pursuit of Knowledge. They forget altogether the fact that this human embodiment is vouchsafed to them only to enable them to attain Liberation through Knowledge. Is it at all necessary that we should have this high and noble birth just to enjoy the pleasures of the senses? If we consider a little, we shall realize that, as a matter of fact, the lower animals have more facilities for such pleasures than ourselves. Bhartṛhari says very beautifully:

स्थाल्यां वैडूर्यमय्यां पचति तिलखलं चान्दनैरिन्धनौघैः
सौवर्णैर्लाङ्गलाग्रैर्विलिखति वसुधामर्कतूलस्य हेतोः ।

छित्वा कर्पूरखण्डं वृतिमिह कुरुते कोद्रवाणां समन्तात्
प्राप्येमां कर्मभूमिं न भजति मनुजो यस्तपो मन्दभाग्यः ॥

"Does anybody bake the sediment of sesamum oil in a vessel of lapis lazuli or use as fuel thereof loads of sandal-wood? Does the seeker of the fibre of the Arka plant plough the soil with ploughs having their edges in gold? Does anybody cut down the branches of the camphor tree to make out of them a fence to protect wild corn? The person who is born as a human being and in this plane of action and is yet unfortunate enough not to engage himself in penance does all these things."

We can understand the phrase Karma-Bhūmi, the plane of action, used by the poet as denoting this human body, competent as it is to perform every action; or we may take it as signifying this sacred country, qualified as it is for the performance of all activities enjoined by the Vedas, and where alone those activities are competent to bear fruit. While other embodiments are mostly for experiencing pain and pleasure, the human body alone is qualified for responsible action. Similarly countries other than this sacred land of ours are mostly regions of enjoyment of pain or pleasure; but this country from the Himālayas in the north to the ocean in the south is uniquely fitted for the performance of the activities enjoined by the Śāstras. Having obtained birth in this land and that as a human being, when shall we get any salvation if we waste the rare advantage that we have now got? If we happen to lose a paltry sum of two rupees, it takes us three days to get over the grief caused by that loss. But we are prepared to waste the whole of this far more valuable life without seeking Knowledge. What can possibly compensate or remedy this colossal loss? If the doctors will only promise to prolong our lingering lives for a few more days, we are prepared to pay them in thousands. But, when we are at present quite hale and hearty and free from any ailment, we are going on wasting time endlessly. That is why the Upaniṣads say that he who does not attain Knowledge in this human life is verily a great loser.

4. *Our Urgent Duty*

Though the human beings are competent to attain Knowledge, it is not all of them that have a taste for Knowledge or attempt to attain it. Four basic qualifications are necessary before one enters on the search for Knowledge. The first of them is Viveka, Discrimination between the eternal and the evanescent. He must know that the Self is the only ever-existing thing and that everything else is impermanent. Once this Knowledge is had he will get the second qualification of Vairāgya, non-desire in all enjoyments to be had here or in the celestial regions. When the impermanence of all things and of the enjoyments that can be had from them is perceived, that is, of all things whether in this world or in the heavenly regions including the Loka of Brahmā, he will entertain no desire for any of them, just as we view with disgust the food belched out by a dog. When this second qualification is secured, he will see the need for the third qualification of training in the "six means," Samādhi-Ṣaṭka. They are in order:

1. Śama, the control of the vagaries of the mind, which thinks of things that have happened, are happening and are going to happen.
2. Dama, the restraint of the senses like the eye from wandering to their respective objects like form.
3. Titikṣā, sufferance of heat and cold, hunger and thirst, pain and pleasure and other opposites.
4. Uparati, cessation of the mind or renunciation.
5. Śraddhā, believing in all sincerity and faith that what is stated in the Vedas or by the Guru is verily the truth.
6. Samādhāna, the peace resulting from the cessation of all unrest in the mind.

All these are collectively called the six-fold means, the third qualification. Mumukṣutva, the intense longing to get free from Bondage, is the fourth qualification. Only he who has all these four qualifications will be properly qualified to enter the path of enquiry into the nature of the Self and it is to him alone that such an enquiry will be fruitful enough to usher in the dawn of Knowledge.

There is no use complaining: "Sages like Śuka long ago attained salvation, but I am still in this condition." They made strenuous efforts in many births in the practice of Knowledge and succeeded in becoming free. But we have not yet made the slightest effort in that direction. We have not yet made up our minds even as regards the necessity for making such efforts. Our minds have not yet become pure enough to entertain such thoughts. We have not yet done any good deeds in a spirit of worship to God to have our minds so pure. But still we are greedy enough to desire the high position of those ancient sages. Suppose two boys are studying in the same class in the same school. One of them studies his lessons with great care and attention. The other is ever bent upon play and does not attend to the lessons. All the conveniences necessary for their boarding and study are quite the same. The teachings of the school-masters are also identical. Still one passes in the examination and the other fails in it. The reason is clearly the difference in the presence and in the absence of proper effort. Similarly the reason for some people becoming seers and transcending Bondage and for some people remaining ignorant and weltering in the mire of Bondage is to be found in the endeavour of the former and the absence of the same in the latter. We must therefore exert ourselves. After all, for whom is this exertion? It is only to unbind the shackles that are restraining us and to get ourselves released from them. Can anybody who is himself held in chains ever, with any propriety, claim to save others? Can a man who does not know to swim claim to take others across a deep river on his own back? But in these days there are many persons who profess to do various things with the sole object of bettering the world. If we only care to enquire whether they have bettered themselves first, we will see that they have not made the slightest effort in that direction. The Śāstras characterize such persons as those who deceive themselves. If a man is to deceive himself, we can easily realize the extent of his foolishness.

Our great Master calls him, who does not exert himself to save himself from Bondage as a person with a clouded intellect. Even this epithet is really very mild to denote a person who is born as a human being and as a man and has the advantage of the Knowledge stored up in the Upaniṣads and yet does not make any effort to free himself from Bondage. Our Master, therefore, adds the further epithet that he is a murderer of his own Self, for he attributes Selfhood to the evanescent non-Self and virtually makes the Self disappear.

लब्ध्वा कथंचिन्नरजन्म दुर्लभं
तत्रापि पुस्त्वं श्रुतिपारदर्शनम् ।
यः स्वात्ममुक्त्यै न यतेत मूढधीः
स आत्महा स्वं विनिहन्त्यसद्ग्रहात् ॥

What doubt can there be that he is really foolish? There are many that are foolish in this world and they will be foolish in certain particulars. One may be ignorant or foolish in worldly matters and another in things taught in the Śāstras. If anybody entertains a doubt, "Do I exist or do I not?", there can be no two opinions about his foolishness. While so, if anybody comes to the conclusion, "I do not exist," we can confidently say that there can be none more foolish than he. If anybody, therefore, entertains any doubt about his own Self and thinks it to be other than what it is, nobody else can be called more foolish than such an individual. The root cause for such doubts and for such mistaken conceptions is the slipping down from one's natural inherent state. It is this slip that we called Pramāda or mistake. The great Master asks therefore whether there can be a worse fool than he who commits a mistake even as regards himself.

इतः को न्वस्ति मूढात्मा यस्तु स्वार्थे प्रमाद्यति ।
दुर्लभं मानुषं देहं प्राप्य तत्रापि पौरुषम् ॥

It, therefore, becomes clear that if a person has any intelligence it is necessary that he should make strenuous efforts to free himself from the Bondage of the non-Self. We must not waste the golden opportunities we have now got; we are born as human beings and are endowed with intelligence and the necessary requisites for the obtaining of Knowledge are still available. We must get rid first of the desire for anything outside us, as it is but the non-Self. We must seek refuge and protection at the feet of a great Seer who has got the realization of the Self. We must understand aright the teachings of that great Master. We must concentrate our mind deeply on the purport of those teachings till we ourselves actually have the realization of the Self. Then certainly we will be free for evermore.